NON-CHURCH-GOING

ITS REASONS AND REMEDIES

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NON-CHURCH-GOING

ITS REASONS AND REMEDIES

A SYMPOSIUM BY

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INTRODUCTION

By W. FORBES GRAY

No acute powers of observation are needed to discover that an appalling number of people never enter a church. It is a sign of the times. In every city and large town there is abundant evidence to show that the churches do not possess a particle of influence with huge multitudes. "We are to-day confronted by the startling fact," says the Rev. R. J. Campbell, "that in practically every part of Christendom the overwhelming majority of the population is alienated from Christianity as represented by the churches. In our own country nearly seventy-five per cent. of the adult population remains permanently out of touch with organised religion. Broadly speaking, it is true that only a section of the middle class ever attends church at all; the workers, as a body, absent themselves; the professional and upper classes do the same." [1] Mr Campbell, for reasons which need not detain us, is inclined to take a gloomy view of the non-church-going problem; but of the substantial accuracy of his

[1] *Christianity and the Social Order*, p. 1.

statements, so far as the large centres of population are concerned, there can hardly be any doubt.

Sunday after Sunday the doors of places of worship are thrown open, but the people do not enter. Churches have simply no attraction for them. Thousands are either hostile or indifferent to every kind of religious communion. The message of the churches, they say, pertains to another world, whereas their sole desire is to live well and comfortably in this. They really do not appreciate the religion of the churches which they have come to regard as a kind of *post-mortem* gospel. Being desperately in earnest about the things of this present world, they are shrewd enough to understand that it is hopeless to look to the churches for guidance and consolation while wedded to purely materialistic conceptions of life and destiny.

It is difficult to overestimate the gravity of the situation. Many Christian people cling to the comforting assurance that non-church-going is not so prevalent as it is sometimes made out to be. Would that it were so. Not all the cheery optimism in the world, however, can obliterate the well-authenticated fact that a feeling of estrangement from the churches extensively pervades all classes of the people. Things are really very bad. Several years ago the *Daily News* organised a religious census. That census, it is

true, applied exclusively to London, but it will hardly be disputed that the features of the non-church-going problem prevailing there are faithfully reproduced, though, of course, on a lesser scale, in all the large towns and cities throughout the country.

Now what was the sum and substance of that remarkable and exhaustive inquiry? Of all the startling, one might almost say, staggering facts which the *Daily News* religious census brought to light, the most outstanding was that in Greater London, which had then a population of 6,246,336, only 1,252,433 were regular worshippers. In other words, four persons out of every five never darkened a church door. The census also proved that this million and a quarter of regular church-goers were largely, if not wholly, drawn from the lower middle class. The people at both ends of the social scale were comparatively little in evidence. And what was the state of matters a few years ago has not improved in the interval.

That another and a brighter side does exist, no one who has given any thought to the subject will seek to deny. Let it not be forgotten that there is a church-going population who love the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. So far from having lost faith in organised Christianity, there are thousands who have found it the only safe refuge for the storm-tossed soul. The

fellowship and worship of the Christian Church is the sweetest experience vouchsafed to them on earth. The non-church-goer may deride them as he pleases ; but these people do a vast amount of practical good in the world—more than they ever get credit for.

When, however, every allowance has been made for what may be called the optimistic view, it must be confessed that the sombre aspect predominates. It may readily be admitted that never, perhaps, was the building of places of worship carried on with such vigour as now. New churches are being reared everywhere, which seems to be hardly symptomatic of religious decay. But it is possible to make too much of the church-building argument. Though more churches are being built, it does not necessarily follow that more people are desirous of attending them. In many cases they are being erected simply to meet the convenience of a migratory population. Who fills the handsome new suburban churches ? Why, to a large extent, the people who have hitherto attended churches in the heart of the city, but, who, for reasons good, bad, and indifferent, now wish to attach themselves to places of worship nearer their own doors. The result usually is that the city churches are left practically derelict. The mere fact, then, that the church-builder is enjoying a period of unprecedented prosperity must not be regarded

as an absolutely sure indication that church-going is on the increase. In many cases the inference is perfectly sound, but in the great majority practically all that church-building proves is that one class of churches is being deserted in favour of another.

Yes, say what one will, it is sadly true that there is a great gulf fixed between the churches and large masses of the people. Nothing, as Dr Ballard says, "can save Christianity from the imputation of being a comparative failure. When we think of what might be to-day, with all the wondrous modern developments of mind and unmeasured wealth of civilisation, if only these were leavened by the mind of Jesus Christ and ruled by the two great laws on which His Gospel turns, no Christian heart at all events can repress the sigh of profoundest sorrow at the facts as they actually present themselves." [1]

Non-church-going, as has already been remarked, has, to a large extent, become a habit with all but the lower middle class. The rich and the professional classes, for the most part, do not attend places of worship. There are many reasons for this alienation, some of them obscure; but, undoubtedly, the real factors are luxury, indolence, the growth of the materialistic spirit, increasing facilities for travel, and intellectual difficulties.

[1] *Christian Churches and the Modern Outlook*, pp. 16, 17.

It is, however, when we come to consider the situation among the working classes and the poor that we are made painfully conscious of the stupendousness of the non-church-going problem. Nor is this at all surprising when it is remembered that the artisan, roughly speaking, represents three-quarters of the population. Proportionately, the workers are probably not worse offenders than the rich. The mere fact, however, of their preponderating numerical strength serves to give more prominence to the problem as it affects them.

What, then, is the position of affairs as regards the workers ? Simply that the churches have very largely lost touch with them. It is calculated, and there seems no reason to doubt the statement, that only three per cent. are directly influenced by the Christian faith. There is defection all along the line. The average working man is convinced that between him and the churches there lie insurmountable barriers. Somehow he cannot breathe the atmosphere of the churches. Organised Christianity, so he believes, has no sympathy with his ideals, and for him at least the good that can come out of churches is infinitesimally small. He therefore despises them with his whole heart. There is a half empty church at the corner of the street in which he lives, but he would no more dream of entering it than he would of taking a trip to the North Pole. Like

the Levite of old, he passes it by on the other side. "To the great mass of hand-workers," says Professor Peabody, "nothing would seem more unreal or uninteresting than the ordinary methods and concerns of the Christian Church. . . . On the day when Christians meet for prayer, Trade-Unionists and Socialists meet to consider what they believe the not less sacred themes of human fraternity and industrial peace." [1]

But there is no need to labour a point of which one may have ocular demonstration on the first day of every week. Pass along any of the main thoroughfares of our cities on a fine Sunday afternoon and you will see it crowded with gaily dressed people, presumably belonging to the artisan classes, on pleasure bent. Go into the parks and gardens, and what do you find? Multitudes of people enjoying themselves in diverse ways to their hearts' content. At popular seaside resorts, at least during the summer months, the same spectacle meets one's gaze. There are huge crowds of promenaders, while hundreds, sometimes thousands, of children are making merry on the beach. And yet all the while the churches are open and calling the people to worship; but alas! they call in vain.

The rise of the institutional church affords in itself a striking witness to the fact that organised Christianity is losing its hold over the masses. It

[1] *Jesus Christ and the Christian Character*, pp. 33, 34.

is becoming increasingly difficult to get people to attend an ordinary church service, and something, it is felt, must be done to set up an institution which, while primarily religious, will minister to the social instincts of the masses. Hence the institutional church with its numerous social agencies, its literary and educational societies, and its recreation clubs. These organisations, be it noted, are purely secular and might be carried on quite as successfully, perhaps more so, if they were separated from their religious environment. Is not their very existence, then, a tacit admission that the churches have somehow lost touch with multitudes of the common people? The institutional church is simply an attempt to compete under religious auspices, with the social club and the public house. Churches run on the old lines, say its promoters, are ceasing to attract; therefore we must provide facilities for all kinds of wholesome instruction, recreation, and amusement as an aid to their rehabilitation in the eyes of the people. Whatever may be thought of such a conception of the functions of a place of worship, the advent of the institutional church is a significant reminder that all is not well with the present state of organised religion. The amazing popularity of the P.S.A. Brotherhood lends additional enforcement of this view. Among the papers included in this volume is one by Mr William Ward,

ex-President of the National Council of the P.S.A. Brotherhood, who testifies that the ordinary church service is failing to attract the masses.

What are the reasons for this growing indifference to the churches on the part of all classes of the people, but especially of the industrial population ? Why is the backbone of the nation drifting away from religious influences ? Working men are not impeccable, but any one who has even the slightest acquaintance with them knows that, as a class, they are as susceptible to lofty influences as those belonging to any other grade of society. Where, then, does the fault lie ?

This can only be ascertained by a careful and impartial survey of the whole field, and some effort will be made in this, and the following papers, to shed a strong light on the various aspects of the non-church-going problem. The writers, lay and clerical, belong to diverse schools of thought, and each has been allowed the utmost latitude in his treatment of the subject so that the problem may be fully and fairly viewed. It is hoped thereby that something may be done to prepare the ground for that exhaustive investigation which, sooner or later, the churches, if they are to be true to their mission, will be compelled to undertake.

In proceeding to investigate the present-day relationship between the churches and the masses

it ought at once to be clearly understood that it is not primarily the outcome of hostility or indifference to Christian teaching. Many estimable people are of opinion that most working men are avowed agnostics who have eagerly enlisted under the banner of anti-Christian leaders like Mr Robert Blatchford. It is not so. There are, of course, many workers who are closely identifying themselves with the tenets of the *Clarion* and are ready to accord any amount of flattery and obsequiousness to Mr Blatchford. The vast majority, however, while recognising his able advocacy of the claims of Labour, repudiate entirely his anti-Christian views.

Nothing, indeed, could be farther from the truth than to assert that the average working man is opposed to the teaching of Christ. On the contrary, many who decline to attend an ordinary church service entertain a lofty admiration for the Founder of Christianity and the truths which He taught. The toiler is, for example, capable of being deeply stirred by the ideal of human brotherhood, which is of the very essence of Christianity. To maintain, then, as many do, that working men, are, as a class, anti-Christian, is to do them a gross injustice. They are not afflicted with a double dose of original sin. They are no more wayward, no more sceptical, no more impious, than those higher in the social scale.

No, the antipathy of Labour is not to Christianity, but to the kind of religion which obtains in many churches. Let me again quote the Rev. R. J. Campbell. "There is no blinking the fact," he says, "that if the churches represent Christianity, then Christianity is rapidly losing its hold in this professedly religious country, as well as in every other country in the civilised world." [1] It is a bold statement coming, as it does, from one who, until recently, was regarded as among the most conspicuous representatives of evangelical Christianity in this country; but, in so far as it applies to masses of working men in our large cities, it is indisputable.

Organised Christianity in the view of two-thirds of the industrial population is mere ecclesiasticism or clericalism. The churches are groaning under the dead weight of professionalism. They are reckoned as so many close corporations run in the interests of the capitalist, the property owner, and the man who fares sumptuously every day. As for the minister, he is a highly paid official whose main business is to see that his church is a "going concern." Commercialism, not religion, is the keynote of the church's existence. It is hard to believe that so utterly gross a conception of the Christian Church prevails, but prevail it does. There are huge working class

[1] *Christianity and the Social Order*, p. 8.

districts in London and in not a few of the provincial cities of England where this view represents the normal attitude of thousands.

The churches stand for clericalism which simply connotes a sedulous regard for the interests of those who give most to the church funds, and an unfaltering adhesion to the line of least resistance. In the ministerial profession, officialism reaches its highest manifestation. Clergymen are docile parts of the established scheme of things. They are bent on preserving the *status quo* at all costs. They stake their reputation on belief, not on conduct. They champion the cause of the poor in their pulpits and pose as the enemies of tyranny, oppression, and greed, but whoever heard of them lending a helping hand in the market place ?

Of course this is an extremely harsh judgment in that it condemns all for the shortcomings of the few. It represents, however, the matured conviction of multitudes of toilers and no good purpose is served by ignoring it. If the non-church-going problem is ever to be solved, it must be by a patient study of the facts as they actually present themselves over wide areas of population. The first thing we must know is the point of view of the average non-church-goer. How does he regard the churches ?

Ecclesiasticism is one cause of the estrangement of working men from the churches: the per-

sistency with which in many places of worship social distinctions are maintained is another. Explain it as we may, the industrial classes have come to look upon the church as the true home of caste and snobbery. "By great numbers the Christian Church is frankly regarded as a mere club of the prosperous, if not a mere symbol of the capitalistic system."[1] The worker finds the whole atmosphere of the church uncongenial. He really believes, rightly or wrongly, that he is not wanted. To enter a place of worship is to be surrounded by well-dressed people with whom he cannot even claim a bowing acquaintance. His most vivid impression of a church is the refined exclusiveness of his fellow-worshippers. He knows about the Christian ideal of human brotherhood, but can find little trace of its influence in the lives of professing Christians.

Caste, then, operates most powerfully in banishing the workman from religious communions of every kind. "The church," he is wont to say, "is no place for me. If I am not frowned upon, I am patronised. Besides I run the risk of being turned out of a seat for which I have not paid a rent. Clearly, I am not wanted." And so he prefers to take a walk on Sundays with his wife and children, or with his mates. One formidable barrier separating the churches and the masses

[1] *Jesus Christ and the Christian Character.* By F. G. Peabody, D.D., p. 34.

will have been broken down when less deference is paid to social distinctions. Their existence is a serious menace to the life of the churches for they deal a blow at one of the elemental facts of Christianity. Caste outside the Christian Church is bad enough, but inside, it is intolerable. Of all forms of snobbery that which is suffused with a little religious sentiment is the worst.

But ecclesiasticism and the worship of caste, bad as they are, do not constitute the sum of the apostasy of the churches in the eyes of the worker. He stands aghast at the hypocrisy of many churchgoers. There is a yawning gulf between precept and practice, between the ideal and the actual. The religion of the churches is not the religion of Christ at all; it is a mere caricature. A grave indictment you will say, and yet it is not wholly untrue. There is a note of unreality about most churches. In place of an abiding sense of the great vitalising truths of Christianity, there is only formalism, and fluid conviction, and a low standard of Christian attainment. Now the worker, though he may not attend a church, has more than a dim apprehension of what Christ taught. He knows the drift of New Testament teaching, and he knows, too, how miserably it is given effect to in the lives of many professing Christians. It is this sorry spectacle which has left a deep impress on his mind.

Cant is a word which is rolled like a sweet morsel under the tongue of every tyro who wishes to indulge in cheap denunciation of the churches. But it must sorrowfully be confessed that the reproach is not wholly undeserved. Cant is crippling the churches more than they know. It invades both pulpit and pew with scrupulous impartiality. Christianity stands for peace and goodwill; but do the churches stand for these things? Not all of them. Every church-goer knows of cases of pulpits ringing one day with fiery denunciations of man's inhumanity to man, and the next defending war with as much vehemence as the churches defended slavery a century ago. Preachers there are, too, who can hardly find words to express their indignation at the cruel social exactions and industrial tyrannies of the time, and yet look with a benignant eye upon those responsible for them simply because they happen to be members of their churches.

Need there be wonder, then, that masses of the people decline to enter places of worship, or to identify themselves with the religion of the churches? Working men are often impeachable on the ground of uncharitableness and crass ignorance, but one thing they see clearly and that is that a frothy effusiveness about the principles of the Sermon on the Mount may be associated with

a sublime indifference to their fulfilment in the affairs of every-day life. They may therefore be forgiven, if, as a condition of their becoming members of churches, they demand that there shall be a little more assimilation between precept and practice on the part of many occupants of the pulpit.

And the same remark applies with equal force to the man in the pew. "It is time," says an acute and brilliant writer, "we awoke to a realisation of the fact that some of the darling children of the Church deserve far more fitly to be called the children of this world. Nourished in the very bosom of the Church they are, save for forms and symbols, virtual pagans; as uninfluenced in the practical conduct of life, especially in the exigences that try their essential quality, as if they were heathens." [1] Are we not all familiar with the sleek, complaisant church-goer, who never misses a service or a prayer meeting, who talks piously about loving "thy neighbour as thyself" while engaged six days a week in trying to get a monopoly of the market; who pays miserable wages to his workpeople, but gives generously to foreign missions; who preaches universal brotherhood, but is making his fortune by exploiting the poor?

Of course it is a gross slander to assume that this is a fair representation of the average type

[1] *The Faith of a Layman.* By W. F. Osborne, M.A., p. 9.

of well-to-do church-goer. At the same time it is notorious that the person here depicted is to be found in all the churches, and, unfortunately, for the cause of truth, the son of Labour has a bad habit of judging Christianity by its failures. He does scant justice to the vast numbers who are really adorning the doctrine of their Master. So long then as there are men in the churches who pursue a tortuous course and try to make the best of both worlds, so long will non-church-going on a large scale continue. With a higher code of commercial morality among church-goers, let alone religion, this momentous problem would be largely solved.

But even assuming that these evils—ecclesiasticism, caste, and insincerity—were non-existent, there would still remain barriers of sufficient strength to prevent the forces of Industrialism entering the churches and heartily co-operating in their work. One is the archaic speech of places of worship. Their tongue is largely unintelligible to the worker. It is divorced from the actual life of to-day. Instead of treating the great questions of religion in language fresh from the mint of actual human experience, the average modern preacher is prone to indulge in the stock phrases of traditional theology. Christ spoke in homely parables which the common people could understand. Therefore, they heard Him gladly.

Many non-church-goers are not unmindful of the fact that the churches have a divine message to proclaim. They know about the eternal problems of sin, redemption, and the future life, and, in many cases, ponder them far more than is generally imagined. But when all is said, the worker cannot rid his mind of the idea that he has got a life to live here and now. And his position is not without a rational basis. He goes upon the principle that the best preparation one can make for the next life is do one's duty faithfully and well in this. He cannot understand what has been called "other worldliness," nor need he. Primitive Christianity knew nothing of it. What concerned the early Church most was the living of the good life on earth; the future state was assigned a subsidiary place. "Other worldliness" was of later growth and owed its origin not to Protestantism, but to Roman Catholicism. It was the Mediæval Church which first taught men to be indifferent to mundane affairs, to turn their thoughts from the life that now is to that which is to come. A certain section of Protestant Christianity assimilated this view, and many people are under its dominion still. This has proved disastrous to the influence of the churches for it has militated against that social reconstruction which is long overdue.

If, then, the churches are to attract and win

the non-church-going section of the lower classes, their message must follow the lines of practical Christian teaching. It must be less remote from the interests of everyday life. "There are devout men and women," says a preacher for the times, "who think they are never at their best and highest, and never entirely religious, unless they are attending conferences on the state of the soul and meetings for the deepening of religious life. They run from convention to convention, and they have an inward belief that, if life could only be a constant succession of Bible-reading and hymn-singing and prayer, they would become pleasing to God." [1] This jaundiced view of Christianity is an important factor in the non-church-going problem. Modern preaching must inculcate before all things, the moral and religious duty of man towards his neighbour.

Furthermore, the Christian message of to-day, at least where the working classes are concerned, must be couched in a language and imagery understandable by the man who has to rear a large family on a small wage and lives in hourly terror lest the gaunt spectre of unemployment should stalk abroad. There must, of course, be a direct spiritual appeal. The heart and conscience must be awakened to newness of life. The emphasis must not be shifted. But let it not be forgotten

[1] *The Secret of the Lord.* By W. M. Clow, B.D., p. 224.

that Christianity has a social side. If the Gospel is individual *first,* it is social *second.* When the social meaning of the Gospel of Christ is assigned its true place, the ways of the churches will no longer appear dark and mysterious to the plain man.

And this social message of Christianity, if it is to reach the ear of the man in the street, must be proclaimed with the minimum of formalism or professionalism. The complaint is often made, and with some truth, that there is too much dreary conventionality about the church service, "starchiness" the worker calls it. "I tell you what it is gentlemen," said Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, turning round at a very dull missionary meeting, and addressing a number of the clergy of his diocese sitting in a solemn row on the platform, "the Church of England is being choked with its dignity. What you want is to take off your neckties and shake the starch out of them"; and the Bishop pretended to shake in the air an imaginary stiff neckcloth such as was at the time worn by the clergy. It is a mistake to suppose that an easy and unconventional manner in the pulpit is incompatible with reverence. Wesley and Whitefield in the eighteenth century, and Spurgeon in our own day, would not have been the great evangelical preachers they were, if they had heeded pulpit conventions.

Another belief which has taken strong hold of the labouring classes and has sown deep distrust of the churches is that organised religion is indifferent, and, in some instances, antagonistic to the ideals of Labour. The worker is convinced that churches have no contact with the economic conditions of everyday life. He expects nothing from them except solemn words about the condition of his soul and the prospects of his entering the kingdom which is not of this world. So he has taught himself to look elsewhere for sympathy and guidance in his march towards the goal of social and industrial amelioration.

Now it may frankly be admitted that exclusiveness does characterise much Christian effort, and that the churches fail to recognise that their duty is not only to save souls, but to apply Christian principles directly to social institutions and to the regulation of the great social forces of our time. Equally true is it, however, that the attitude adopted by many workers in regard to this matter is based on a misunderstanding of the functions of a church. It is foolish to demand from churches what it is not in their power to give. They are not labour boards. You must not expect them to undertake work which is beyond the sphere of their action. They have their own distinctive character and ideals to maintain. They are primarily religious institutions, and if they have a

duty to perform towards the social and economic problems of the day, and no right-thinking man will deny that they have, it assuredly does not consist in taking sides and advocating this policy as against that. To do this would be to make the church a mere tool in the hands of contending parties. Churches are to be a reconciling, not a disintegrating, force in the world, as they would certainly become by espousing either the cause of the capitalist or the cause of the worker. They stand for the eternal cause of individual and national righteousness.

But while the churches are not to allow themselves to be drawn into the vortex of Labour politics, they must bear their part in the readjustment of the economic conditions of life which is so urgently needed. They must proclaim with all the emphasis at their command the broad principles enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount, and see that they are brought to bear upon the working out of every scheme for the improvement of the material condition of humanity. They must make strenuous efforts to ascertain the causes of social distress. They must give an attentive ear to the bitter cry of the unemployed and those that have no bread. The material state of man's existence in this world has an important bearing upon what he will be in the next. It is vain to tell a man that he is desperately wicked and had better

mend his ways if he is not to be consigned to everlasting perdition when he has an empty purse, when unemployment is staring him in the face, and when he has every inducement to do evil rather than good. Of course, it is not argued that once you look after a man's material welfare, his spiritual state is assured. Many people actually believe this, but there is no reflecting person who is not impressed by its palpable absurdity. If, however, it does not at all follow that because you look after a man's body, you will win his soul, it is incontestable that by ministering to his social betterment, the chances of Christianizing him are immeasurably increased.

There is a certain type of church-goer who complains that the social movement has become materialized. If it has, then much of the blame must be laid at the door of the Church. Nothing saddened the philanthropic heart of the great Chalmers so much as the indifference of the churches to social problems. As we have recently been reminded,[1] his writings prove that he was filled with a holy passion for the improvement of the social conditions, and the moral character of tens of thousands of toilers. But the churches have been in no hurry to profit by the example of Chalmers. Even to-day one meets with church-

[1] *The Social Ideal and Dr Chalmers' Contribution to Christian Economics.* By J. Wilson Harper, D.D.

goers who regard with serious misgivings, the endeavour to apply Christian principles to Land, Labour, and Capital.

Now, until the churches seriously address themselves to the task of enforcing the claims of social Christianity, they cannot hope to win back large masses of the people whom they should never have lost. There is a danger, says one writer in dealing with this question,[1] of "setting up a secondary object, alongside of the supreme object of Christian devotion, and thus of yielding a divided allegiance." There ought to be no danger. Christianity is not made up of water-tight compartments; it cares for the whole man. Perish, then, all narrow conceptions of Christian teaching. Too long have the churches attempted to delimit the operations of the religion of Christ; too long have they turned a deaf ear to the social and industrial anomalies of the time; too long have they remained ignorant of the heart-rending conditions, under which many thousands have to work year in and year out. "The poor of London," says a Bampton Lecturer, "have been thrust into and are kept by a Society which, till lately, called itself Christian, in conditions of life which make the preaching of the Gospel to them a mockery." [2]

[1] *Christianity and Social Questions.* By Archdeacon Cunningham, D.D. F.B.A., p. 201.

[2] *The Reproach of the Gospel.* By J. H. Peile, p. 110.

And yet some good people wonder how it is that we are confronted with a non-church-going problem in an acute form.

Churches do not exist for the purpose of carrying out the behests of any body of men, be they rich or poor : their marching orders come from an infinitely higher authority ; but working men and others have a claim to be heard in so far as they ask that the churches shall recognise Christianity as a pervasive influence, making itself felt in the material as well as the religious life of man. Organised religion, if it is to be true to its high vocation, must go forward to this work of social reconstruction. The social passivity which has prevailed so long must come to an end. The churches must make an honest attempt to grapple with the problems to which Chalmers pointed the way more than sixty years ago. Industrialism was then at the incipient stage and might, without much difficulty, have been permeated with Christian teaching. But the churches were heedless of Chalmers' advice, with the result that Industrialism, now one of the mightiest forces in the country, exists, to a large extent, apart from Christian influences.

There is one other noteworthy cause of non-church-going among the working classes, and that is the divided state of Christendom. The worker is not by any means singular in deprecating the schismatic temper of the churches. All classes regard

their divisions as a source of weakness. But the industrial classes are probably more deeply impressed by them, seeing that stern necessity has taught them the value of unity. At any rate they are firmly convinced that the mere existence of a small army of denominations, all professing allegiance to a common Christianity, is bound to cripple the power of the churches. A house divided against itself cannot stand.

There is, of course, an answer to this. Outward uniformity is not essential to the ultimate triumph of Christianity. Working men do not understand how there can be the most absolute unity co-existing with and underlying all denominational differences. Christian unity must not be confounded with ecclesiastical unity. But, however this may be, it is the plain duty of the churches without compromise of principle to do all in their power to impress the popular imagination with a vivid sense of their essential oneness in face of the growing forces of reaction. A more tolerant spirit on the part of the various sections of the Christian Church, together with cordial co-operation in eradicating social injustice of every kind; in short, a more vivid realisation of the lessons which Christianity has in store for the twentieth century —let the churches give earnest heed to these things and we shall hear less of non-church-going.

And here we touch the solution of this tremen-

dous problem—the greatest that confronts the Christian Church of to-day. How are those masses of our urban population who are more benighted from a religious standpoint than many in foreign lands whom we are pleased to call heathen—how are such people to be brought under Christian influences? It is a highly complicated problem, but if the churches are to go forth conquering and to conquer, it cannot be shirked. A temporizing policy will not do. "The one utterly impossible condition," Dr Ballard truly says, "is the *status quo*. On to triumph, or back to oblivion, is the dilemma confronting the Christianity of the early twentieth century." [1]

Manifestly, the paramount duty of the churches is to thoroughly master the facts of the situation, and then to summon all the moral, intellectual, and spiritual forces at their command for an attack on the heathenism of our cities, which will leave no manner of doubt as to the result. But as a preliminary they must put their own house in order. There must be a radical reconstruction. Sincerity, not professionalism, must be the dominant note of the churches. They must cease taking short views of Christianity and being governed by half truths. They must translate the principles of the Sermon on the Mount into the thought and speech of the time and see that these are really

[1] *Christian Churches and the Modern Outlook*, p. 21.

controlling the lives of men. Frankly, there is room for grave misgiving as to the future of the churches, unless they widen their outlook. Christianity is a far bigger thing than some of them imagine.

Not only must the churches enlarge the sphere of their action, but their machinery must be changed. It is hopelessly out of date. It is no more fit to do the work that is now expected of it than the Spanish Armada would have been to cope with a modern fleet. There must be extensive overhauling if it is to divert the surging tide of democratic sentiment into Christian channels. It is of no avail to contend that such work, as has been indicated, is beyond the province of religious communions. Everything that pertains to the upbuilding of a stronger, purer, happier life comes within their purview. A far more prominent place must be given to the preaching which seeks to relate the Christian religion to the problems that are affecting the individual and collective welfare of men in this present life. The kingdom of Heaven must be set up on earth.

No ideal has captivated the hearts of the poor like that of human brotherhood. They are constantly acting upon it. Everyone who has lived and worked among them knows how kind and helpful they usually are to one another. Brotherhood, they know to be one of the choicest fruits

of Christianity, and the fact that it has long been a negligible quantity in many of our churches is to them wholly inexplicable. Happily, a brighter day is dawning. The note of brotherhood is now being sounded clear and strong in many a pulpit. "Never, perhaps, has the brotherhood of man been so strongly emphasised as at the present time. Religious teachers of all schools speak of it, while some of them make it their chief doctrine, and in its terms try to explain all truths and all duties." [1] But the doctrine of human brotherhood must not only be preached: church-goers must see to it that brotherhood is applied to commerce, politics, and social affairs. It is no new gospel the masses crave for; it is the old gospel reinterpreted in the light of the social and economic conditions of our time—nothing more and nothing less. A practical application of the principles of New Testament Christianity is the real desideratum. The church of the future will be the church pulsating with the life of the twentieth century, knowing well the problems which beset it, and bringing to their solution the influence of the great ideals for which Christianity stands.

The preceding pages have dealt exclusively with the non-church-going problem as it affects

[1] *The Social Ideal and Dr Chalmers' Contribution to Christian Economics.* By J. Wilson Harper, D.D., p. 231.

the toiling masses of humanity, for there lies the heart of the whole matter. Christianize the forces of Industrialism and you Christianize three-fourths of the population. There remain the upper classes. They, too, are largely alienated from the churches, though for different reasons. One or two comments may be made on the main causes which operate in their case.

Mr Haldane, in an address which he delivered some time ago in Edinburgh, asserted that the prevailing attitude of the working-classes seemed to be that of a " mild agnosticism." If he had said they were under the influence of a gross materialism, he would have been nearer the mark. The truth is, the bulk of working-men are uninfluenced by the intellectual aspects of belief. Nor is this to be wondered at, since only a disciplined intelligence can wrestle effectively with the problems proceeding from that quarter. No, the doubting Thomases are, for the most part, confined to the educated classes. In affirming this, it is not intended, however, to imply that intellectual difficulties are the only reason why large numbers of the cultured and the wealthy remain outside the churches. Materializing influences are working almost as powerfully amongst them as amongst the labouring population. But unbelief is a very important factor. Educated men, who take the trouble to think, find much of the preaching of

the present day, intellectually unsatisfying. It is shallow and dogmatic, and merely appeals to the emotions. Moreover, it does not keep abreast of the times either in its message or the mode in which it is expressed. So far as some pulpits are concerned, science and philosophy might not exist. Christianity is not interpreted in the light of advancing knowledge.

Now it is of primary importance that the churches, if they are to regain their influence over the educated classes, should make an earnest effort to grapple with all that is intellectually antagonistic to the Christian faith. Intellectual sterility is one of the worst misfortunes that can befall the modern pulpit. It begets a distrust in the minds of thinking men, which is not easily eradicated. Many an "honest doubter," it must regretfully be confessed, has only too good reason for forsaking the churches. The intellectual quality of many of the sermons preached nowadays is an insult to the intelligence of any educated person. Let it be frankly acknowledged that many ministers do strive earnestly to stimulate their intellectual life, but it is to be feared that no small proportion cease to live mentally, certainly theologically, once they have finished their college course. Ministers ought to be intellectual as well as spiritual leaders. They owe it to themselves, to the cause of Christian truth, and to those who listen to

them. Given a higher standard of intellectual efficiency and honesty in the pulpit, one serious cause of non-church-going among the cultured would be materially lessened.

Of course many among the upper classes are not impelled to forsake the Church on intellectual grounds. They have neither the capacity nor the inclination to provide a rational basis for their creed. They are quite impervious to theological considerations of any kind. Non-church-going in their case is not traceable to conviction, but to an inordinate love of the good things of this life. They worship Mammon with their whole heart. Life for them has become entirely denuded of spiritual influences. Such people are in the grip of a deadly materialism. The spoilt children of Luxury, their outlook upon life is strictly limited by what is temporal. They partake of the pleasures of the passing hour, greedily, giving no thought to the morrow.

Here, then, is one of the most hopeless aspects of the non-church-going problem. The task of Christianizing the heathen of the East End is simple compared with that of Christianizing the heathen of the West End. So diverse and complicated are the elements which enter into the case of the latter that it seems impossible to suggest means whereby they may be brought into touch with organised religion. The ordinary machinery

of the churches is powerless. Nothing, it would appear, can stem the rising tide of indifference among the wealthy, leisured, and cultured classes to all that pertains to their eternal welfare, but a great revival of religious conviction. An abiding sense of what Lord Morley has finally called " the incommensurable things " is a prime necessity. And if this appreciation of the spiritual values is to be restored, it is surely abundantly clear that our pulpits must be occupied by men whose religious zeal is tempered by knowledge of the critical problems of to-day and of the forces which are silently, yet ceaselessly and resistlessly, modifying social environment. Preachers must give light as well as heat. Evangelicalism of the type in vogue a generation ago, may still influence the lower orders, but it is powerless to effect a religious reformation, to any appreciable extent, among the rich and enlightened classes.

The sum of the whole matter seems to be that if the higher classes are to be emancipated from the baneful influence of the thousand and one distractions of modern life, if religion is to become a permanent and paramount factor in their lives and to sweep away the last vestige of an enervating materialism; then the Christian pulpit must be made far more powerful than it is. The outlook of the preacher must be enlarged, the note of conviction must be sounded as it has not been

sounded for many a day, intellect as well as character must be disciplined, knowledge of the many complex problems with which men and women are confronted in the twentieth century must be deepened and systematised. Churches must be conservative institutions so far as the spirit which animates them is concerned, but in their machinery and methods they ought to be the most radical. The misfortune is, however, they have an inveterate tendency to become conservative in everything. Hence the want of adaptability of their message to the times with the lamentable consequences which form the theme of this volume.

It is truer to-day than ever it was, that the hope of the Christian Church lies in a state of perpetual rejuvenescence; the hope of the world in the triumph of Christianity in the heart of man and in society of which he is a member.

I

By REV. PREBENDARY CARLILE

It is unfortunately beyond question that the church-going habit has of late years progressively declined, and threatens to decline still further in the future. Those of us who can look back for fifty years remember that, although there were then as always great numbers of people outside the influences of religion, the British people were in the main a church-going people. No one who cared for the opinion of his fellows would have ventured to absent himself habitually from public worship on Sundays. In many cases, possibly the majority, church-going may have been no more than a habit, a piece of conventional respectability, like wearing a black coat or a tall hat; but the habit was a good one. It was a recognition of the fact that religion has its claim upon every man, and that there are higher interests in life than those of business or pleasure. I should be very sorry to defend a religion merely conventional; but I am not sure whether it was not better to go to church or chapel because public opinion required it, rather than neglect it alto-

gether. In the midst of the commercialism and Philistinism of the early and mid-Victorian periods, church-going, and the custom, scarcely less widely observed, of daily family prayers, supplied a certain corrective of worldliness and practical unbelief.

But all that has changed. One has only to look round to see how great the change is. It is significant that church-going is no longer a necessary mark of respectability, nor its neglect a cause of social discredit. If a rich man prefers to play golf, or go motoring, if a poor man goes to a coursing meet, or to see a spicy play at his club, on Sunday, instead of going to church, that is considered to be a matter affecting the man himself and no one else. Nobody would dream of declining his friendship, or refrain from inviting him to one's house, on that account. The idea of there being any duty in the matter is dead.

Among all classes there is a very large proportion, I should be afraid to say how large, who never enter a place of worship, and a proportion still larger whose attendance is more or less irregular and infrequent.

In examining the causes which have led to this lamentable state of things, let me say that I write as an Englishman and a member of the Church of England. I can claim no special knowledge of the conditions affecting Scotland and the various

Nonconformist bodies of this country; but it is not one church only which suffers. Every religious body, I believe, has cause to lament the continual decrease in attendance at its public services; and the causes and remedies must be much the same in every instance.

One cause is the natural reaction from the perverted and unscriptural view of the obligations of the Lord's Day which was all but universal fifty years ago, and which even now is only slowly being displaced in religious circles by a saner opinion. It was an evil legacy from Puritan times, and arose from a confusion of the Christian Sunday, the weekly feast of the Resurrection, with the Jewish Sabbath. The result was to make the day far more tedious and hateful than any Jewish Sabbath, which I understand to be observed as a day of real rest and modest cheerfulness. Many of us remember the terrors of our childhood's Sundays; the repression, the interminable dulness; the uninteresting books; all the items which went to make the day one of penance. We were told that religion was a glad and happy thing, and that we ought to look forward with joy to "the Sabbaths of Eternity"; but the Sundays of our youth conveyed an impression very different. The services of the church were dreary in the extreme, far too long, and often unrelieved by any music or singing

except those wretched parodies of the Psalms which have kept from oblivion the names of Tate and Brady. It is hardly to be wondered at that, in the natural revolt from this tradition of Sunday, many people have gone much too far in the other direction.

Another contributory cause to the neglect of church-going is the increase of the foreign and Jewish elements in the population of late years. The Jews, both rich and poor, observe their own Sabbath—all honour to them for keeping the precepts of their religion in a way which puts many Christians to shame. Naturally they do not observe Sunday also; but use it as a day of pleasure and business. Their example influences others. The Christian who has no particular sense of the obligations of religion sees the Jew keeping open his shop, or pursuing pleasure, on Sunday, and thinks there is no reason why he should not do the like; not reflecting that on Saturday the Jew, for the sake of his religion, has lost money by keeping his shop shut, and has spent the day as one of religious observance, while Christians were about their ordinary business or pleasure.

Foreigners not Jews have also brought with them their national customs, one of which is to keep open places of business on Sunday, and to use the day for recreation. Englishmen, both poor and rich, have been influenced by this example;

though it might well be inquired whether the foreigner does not combine attendance at the services of his church with his pleasure or business on that day. So far as Roman Catholics are concerned, I believe this would be found to be almost universally the case. Attendance at an early Mass, followed by secular pursuits for the rest of the day, is assuredly not an ideal method of Sunday observance, but it is better than staying away from church altogether.

Our national character seems to have changed for the worse. One can only hope that the change is a temporary one; and that the nation may return to its former pursuit of loftier aims than those of selfish pleasure and ease. At present the main characteristic of the day, in all classes, is impatience of dulness, love of pleasure, anxiety to be kept amused. Physical pain, boredom, seriousness, are the chief ills of the latter-day philosophy of life; physical pleasure the chief good. Our strength is no longer in confidence and quietness; our weakness is displayed in the perpetual need for excitement and desire for new sensations.

Church-going is neglected, not from any active hostility to religion, but because it involves some small amount of effort; it is dull, old-fashioned, uninteresting; secular pursuits are more exciting and drive dulness away much better. So the

habit is lost, and so the evil is perpetuated from generation to generation. Children may be forced by their non-church-going parents to go to church and Sunday-school; but when they become their own masters, is it likely that they will do otherwise than follow the example of their elders, and regard church-going as a thing to be done or left undone, according to the whim of the moment?

The whole thing resolves itself into practical agnosticism. "Is there a future life? We do not know; but at least we know that it is possible to get a great deal of pleasure out of this life; therefore the best philosophy is to do so. 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die'; as to what is to come after death, that may take care of itself." It is not active rampant atheism with which the churches have to contend to-day so much as careless indifference, a disinclination to be troubled about problems which for the purposes of the moment are treated as non-existent.

No nation can long endure where there is not recognition of the fact that the spiritual life has its claims; and that man does not live by bread alone. "Righteousness exalteth a nation," and preserves it from decay, but when righteousness goes, what is there that will stand between the nation and ruin? No armaments, however mighty, will avail.

I do not think the case is hopeless. In my belief

the heart of the nation is still sound, and existence is for most people still a serious thing, having grave issues of life and death which each man and woman has to face for himself and herself. There is no need to despair. Frivolity, the mad chase after pleasure and amusement at all costs, the absence of high aims, are but the froth which comes to the surface. In time the native good sense and solidity of the nation will recover itself; possibly under the sobering effect of some great national disaster (may God avert it); or mere weariness and satiety may drive home the lesson that life is no life which is destitute of a spiritual element. The prodigal's husks may satisfy for the moment; but the time will come when more solid food will be needful.

What can be done to hasten the day, and roll back the reproach of heedlessness of God and our obligations towards Him?

In the Church Army we are brought much into contact with the seamy side of life. We see much of ruined lives, of blasted hopes, of the results of self-indulgence and want of self-control and steadfastness. Much of the distress which we see, and which it is our duty to endeavour to remove, is due to no other cause than slackness and want of moral fibre. We find, in nine cases out of ten, that in reclaiming a criminal, a drunkard, or a degenerate, the first thing to be done is to create

or recreate character, and to bring home a sense of responsibility towards God and man. When this can be done—as it can be in the case of hundreds of the poor wrecks who come before us every year—the rest follows almost naturally. Even in the most apparently hopeless cases, the power of recuperation is there, awaiting the kindling touch that can bring it to life.

Similarly in our national character, the desire of a power for higher things is still existent, and may in time come to life. As the nation is made up of individuals it is by influencing individuals that the whole mass must be leavened. Religion is still a very real force. The Master said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." The Cross has assuredly lost none of Its power; It is never out of date. Conviction of sin and the need of a Saviour and reconciliation with God are the only means which can work the change.

Religion is a stern thing. It claims the whole life and being of every man; and failure will be the result if we attempt to make it only a competitor among other forms of pastime and diversion. It is everything or it is nothing. It is something more than a means of whiling away the dull hours of Sunday afternoon or evening. It is a matter of eternal life or death; and in my judgment, the higher we place the claims of religion the more likely is it that ultimate and permanent success will result.

Yet there is no reason why we should not adopt every lawful means to call men's attention to the subject. There must be no watering down of the message to suit the easy-going spirit of the times—sin and death are matters too terrible to be played with. But it is possible to present the message in such a way as to attract people whom "Dearly beloved brethren" leaves cold and unmoved.

If I may refer to my own experience for one moment, when I first went to my own church of St Mary-at-Hill, I found it practically deserted, for it stands in a parish devoid of Sunday population. My methods have been criticised, but I can answer—I say it in no spirit of vainglory, but to illustrate the power of the Gospel when people have it brought to their notice—by pointing to a church crowded to overflowing, Sunday after Sunday, by men and women of all classes, including hundreds who have been criminals, drunkards, and outcasts. We attract them by going out into the highways with music and banners, and by giving them of our best—good music, good pictures by lantern, and the best of teaching, that is, the teaching of the Cross.

We make things easy for the unlearned by putting the words of the service and hymns plainly before them on the screen, and by speaking in homely familiar fashion. But we do not make things easy for anyone by teaching that there

is any road to salvation and peace save the royal road—faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and the redemption wrought by Him on Calvary.

Attract men and women by all lawful means; and having compelled them to come in, let the Gospel do its own blessed work. That is the sum and substance of it all. Methods must vary, according to place and circumstances; but never let us forget that the Gospel suits the needs of every man and can exercise its force upon every man.

Some of our church services are still too long. If we are to cope with the impatience and hurry of the age it is necessary to avoid any appearance of undue prolongation of the service. Matins, Litany and Ante-Communion, with sermon and numerous hymns, make up a form of devotion unnecessarily long, and with their inevitable repetitions give some excuse for complaints of tedium.

I should like to plead for a great extension of the use of our beautiful Communion Office as a separate sung service. The Service which our Lord Himself ordained has an attractive power which is unrivalled, and if given with simple music, such as the Church Army Communion music, and with quite a short address or none at all, it need not last more than half an hour. If this take place at an early hour, with Matins and sermon at 11, Litany in the afternoon, and Evensong with sermon in the evening, no one can

complain of length, particularly if the number of hymns is kept within bounds.

To appreciate liturgical service requires familiarity. Many a man is repelled from church because of the supposed difficulty of "finding his places." To meet the needs of such, more free and easy services of the mission type, are wanted. Men and women will often come to a mission-room who will not come to church. This is the work which is being done by hundreds of Church Army evangelists and Mission sisters; the fruits of their labours being passed on into the hands of the parish clergy.

When we get a man to church or mission-room let us make him feel that he is wanted there. Give him something to do if possible; sing in the choir, play an instrument, give out hymn books; keep order among the children, anything to make him feel that he is part of the organisation. I suppose I need hardly say that rented pews are one of the best means ever discovered of keeping the outcast and outsider away from church—his own church just as much as that of the wealthy and respected pew-holders. God's grace is free and open to all; surely His house should be free and open too.

Among us who have been called to be God's ministers to His people, let there be more faith and reliance on Him; less trusting in our own powers and in secular adjuncts—excellent as

many of them are—to our work of ministering the Word and Sacraments. We cannot all be great preachers, though when people grumble at sermons it is possible that there may sometimes be fault in the hearer as well as in the preacher. But we can all, by the help of our Divine Master, set Him forth by our life and conversation. The influence of the life of one who follows in the footsteps of Christ is often greater than all his sermons. Let us so live that men may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. So may we bring into the Kingdom here one and there another who now stand outside, and they in their turn may bring others. Not the clergy only, but every member of Christ's flock, may thus do something towards bringing the nation back to God. The influence of a layman living in the world, and yet unspotted, may far exceed that of any clergyman.

We cannot see God's purposes, and it may be that even now He is preparing some great national revulsion of thought and feeling which shall bring men to His feet, not by ones or by twos, but by tens and hundreds of thousands ; when the nation shall choose to serve Him rather than the idols of Mammon and self-pleasing. If and when that blessed day should come, we, or our children, shall no longer have to deplore empty churches, or that separation from God of which empty churches form the outward and visible sign.

II

By J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, M.P.

STATED in its most obvious form the reason why working men do not go to church is that they have ceased to take an interest in going to church. The middle classes attend church very largely because "it is the right thing to do." It has become a class habit; and that is shown by the fact that they tend to collect in those churches that have the most distinctive atmosphere of respectability attached to them. It is said that a carriage and pair does not appear at a Nonconformist place of worship for two generations. But this has no influence on working class conduct. Working men will attend or desert the church as the church itself attracts or repels them or ceases to be of importance to their minds.

The question we have, therefore, to answer is: Why is the church becoming of so little account to the working classes? The answer is a threefold one.

In the first place, the church itself is to blame. It has not kept in touch with living Christianity. I am not in favour of the political church; I am not in favour of the controversial, topical sermon;

but I am in favour of the human church. The Christian faith is not an absolute thing reigning in a vacuum. Its appeal and its expression change as society itself changes. Therefore the church is a living organism; it is not the vehicle for the expression of unaltering and unalterable dogmas and creeds. That has been the secret of all our great spiritual revivals from the days of the Friars to the time of the Disruption. The divine purpose in society unfolds itself from age to age in different desires and agitations which call up into active life different principles of belief and sympathies of the heart, and when organised Christianity lags behind, or misunderstands, or gets out of touch with the sociological movement it becomes parched and its vitality ebbs away. The priest then rules instead of the prophet.

In its attempts to retain its place, the first efforts of the church are not always good. It goes to the market place. It appeals to the senses. It seeks after the peace of ritual; it makes its services "attractive"; it sometimes rushes to the side of the secular movements and offers them its pulpit for a platform. This does not save the church. It only entangles it more completely in tendencies making for its weakness. It is a medicine not a food—and a very dangerous medicine at that. A sparkle comes into the patient's eye, an energy quivers through his frame, but this is the effect of

an uneconomical draft upon unexpended strength, which, not being renewed by the effort, is speedily followed by the reaction of great prostration.

The function of the church is not to become the world, but to inspire the world; the duty of the preacher is not to propound a scientific sociology, but to infuse the right spirit of eternal goodness in all sociologies; the work of the church is not to support any one of the active interests, but to keep all the conflicting interests in spiritual touch with the divine idea which is unfolding itself by the movements and conflicts which form the subject matter of human history. In a living tree the sap in springtime finds new channels through which to run; in a living society the divine idea finds new growths to invigorate with the spiritual energy which is the life of all creation. The life is the same, unchangeable and unchanging, but the forms through which it manifests itself come and go with the years. Thus, I note, first of all, that the church now fails to teach all classes how to fulfil their responsibilities in the modern world. The greater part of its message to the rich is "be philanthropic," to the poor is "be obedient." At best that is feudal, and the Feudal chapter of our history was closed generations ago.

Here we reach a point in our thoughts where we turn from the church as an organisation to the body of ministers who speak for the church. For,

the church cannot live on its ritual, on its music, on its congregational singing, on its beautiful prayers handed down from times when the English tongue was pure and English diction was simple. These are valuable in so far as they open the gateways to the citadels where the spirit dwells, but, as it were, some foot must enter these gateways and some being must go into the citadel. The spoken word, the appeal and the guidance which no Elizabethan or Edwardian could have uttered must be given out. The personality of the minister must always count. Is our ministry interpreting the divine idea to the twentieth century ? It is not. The heart of man has changed.

I have in my possession a copy of Brown's Bible bound in calf. It stands on my bookshelves, solid, austere, gloomy. With it I have placed a copy of Dr George Adam Smith's *Isaiah*. And when I look at them I think I understand what has happened. The past generation thought of the future and trembled, the present generation thinks of the future and vaguely expects. The past generation was introspective, the present thinks of the world and its pageantry of hope and sorrow. The past generation thought of God in direct relationship with itself, the present thinks of Him through His works. In the words of the schools, to the past generation religion was a statical exercise, to the present it is a dynamic belief.

The past generation believed when its ministers visited it, wore a black coat through the week, and preached about vicarious sacrifice on Sunday; the present generation will believe when its ministers interpret to it the laws of righteousness, of justice, of mercy, of humility. The past generation asked for beliefs, the present is in search of conduct. The past generation imposed an easy task on its ministers, the present places exceedingly difficult burdens upon them. The past was content with the priest, the present asks for a prophet. The curricula and the training of our colleges were designed by the past generation and do not produce what the present is in need of. I have hanging on my walls, in old dark mahogany frames, engravings of some of the past generation of preachers, honoured and valued by their people—men like Mr Gentle of Alves and Dr Topp of Elgin. Their faces are the faces of the dead, just as ruffles and knee breeches are the dress of the dead. Each generation has its own facial expression—that is, it has its own kind of leader and comforter.

Turning now to the working classes themselves, we must not assume that the empty pews which they once filled means that they take no longer an interest in spiritual things. If any think that that is true, they will confess to their error if they were to attend the Sunday morning meetings of

an Adult School in a Midland town, or the Sunday afternoon services of a Brotherhood. I write of the Midlands because I know them best. Early in the morning, at an hour when the ordinary church-goer, whose church-going habits are taken by some as the only evidence that the flame of Christian worship is not yet extinguished in the land, is still turning over in a comfortable bed bracing himself up to undergo the pain of rising, men who have been working in factories all the week are already in the class rooms. Often, a man as simple and unlettered as themselves is leading them in their exercises, and like the prophets is expounding a living faith and is justifying, not the *idea* of God, but the *ways* of God, to children who yearn for the light, but before whose eyes the experience of life has made a mist to fall. He is wrestling with "the tribulation, and Kingdom, and patience that are in Jesus."

But that is not the full evidence by any means, and I shall offer another set of facts as proof of my belief, that if men do not go to church the reason is not that they have lost faith. It has always struck me as a cruel triumph of the cynical spirit that the Labour Party and the Socialist movement should be accused, and the accusation be upheld by some people of at any rate a fair endowment of honesty and intelligence, of being opposed to religion and hostile to the various

institutions which have grown up around it. The truth is that from its very beginnings in a Socialist propaganda of a somewhat hard and youthful kind, the Labour Party has sought an entrance into men's convictions by an appeal to their better sentiments and to their primitive ethical assumptions regarding justice and fairness, punishments and rewards. So far from undermining those ethical conceptions which are at once the product and the basis of the religious appeal, the Labour movement has gone to them for its own foundation, and if it has come into conflict with the church on that ground, the reason has been in the main that the secular preachers have challenged the ecclesiastical ones for being unjust stewards and neglectful keepers of the vineyards. Just as Nonconformity quarrelled with Conformity on the ground that it was earthly and that it tolerated the money changers in its temples, so in our own day this oft-repeated conflict between the new spirit—in reality not a "new" spirit at all, but the Eternal spirit of absolute perfection striving through the darkness in which epochs of effort sink into quiescence—and the formal one has not taken the shape of a religious revival like Nonconformity, but of a secular revival like the Labour and Socialist movement. The stream has run, for the time being, outside the ecclesiastical territory and is fertilising other fields. The

churches will seek it again. They are indeed beginning to seek it, as the wandering tribes of men used to seek the springs and the pastures. But let the church be quite clear on this point. It must not excuse its failures by saying that men have gone after the daughters of the world. It has rather committed that sin itself.

There is, however, a tendency at work to-day crushing out the spiritual life of the people. At one end of Society it is luxury, at the other it is harassing poverty or the fear of poverty—the fear often being more devastating than the actuality. Most men lose their spiritual appetites when life crushes too heavily upon them. Their minds and their bodies become weary; their imagination becomes debased; they turn to alcohol for bodily and mental comfort. Thus our news-stalls are heaped with piles of rubbish, designed to cater for a public which is assumed to be ignorant, to have no judgment, no critical faculty for discriminating good from bad, or worthy from unworthy. Vices peculiar to this form of degradation—the most characteristic of which is gambling and the turning out of vast crowds to see "fast" games which keep their nerves on strain steadily for an hour or two—appear. Paganism rears its head, and the hail-fellow-well-met type of blackguard appealing to the easy toleration of the crowd becomes its hero and leader. Society

then runs the grave risk that its purer waters of refreshing—which have become unpalatable—may be diluted so as to become palatable, and thus the sermon, the spoken word, goes, and pleasant religious recreations take its place.

In the world of the spirit men must have leisure and peace, plenty of work but not dulling toil; they must have enough spontaneity and freshness of mind left after earning their daily bread to lead them into the ways of the intellect, into those dream cities where, alone, the imprisoned soul finds liberty and happiness. But one only needs to go into our great factory and industrial towns to-day—stand at the gates and see the men rush in in the morning or watch them pour out in the evening—go to their sunless and uninspiring houses without a line of masonry to appeal to thought, as the old houses with their corbelled roofs and quaint windows did even when men were not conscious of it—follow the day's drudgery of their wives and the day's squalid play of their children—to understand something of the canker that is eating the heart of the people. How often we say it, and how little we understand it: "This age is handed over to materialism."

These social forces make not only for the emptying of churches, but for the deadening of that hunger and thirst after righteousness which compel men to care for the work of the churches. They

return men to that state of dulled sense which makes them brutish. Sunday becomes a day of lounging about—not even a day of secular rest and recreation, but a " fine day for loafing."

My threefold answer to the question put to the writers of these papers therefore is: the church has lost touch with modern life and the duties of modern life; the individual still has his thirst and hunger after righteousness, but Society, with its materialist and debasing pursuits after wealth and folly and the weariness it imposes upon the people engaged in its tasks of industrial production and competition, makes the spiritual life difficult. The church will have to consider these facts and will have to make up its mind what it is to do regarding them.

The mediæval theory of politics was that the state was subordinate to the church. This was followed by a theory that state and church had separate and independent functions. Both are wrong. The facts of life require some theory in accordance with which both the church and state are united in a transcending reality, that of Humanity. Both are aspects of the same personality; both suffer if that personality deteriorates; both contribute to the completeness of the personality. If the church, basing its authority on its own divine mission, were to insist upon a recognition of its life by those who rule our material

destinies, were to resist compromises which are of the nature of surrenders of its own principles, were to decline to keep silent on the fact that in business, as well as in religion and theology, the spirit is eternal and the flesh temporal, the state would change too, and its policies would respond to the spiritual life of the church. But as it is, the church is materialist. It is at peace with the world—even, it excuses the world. It is subordinate to the state—even to the counting-house.

Thus it is that instinctively an awakened democracy feels that the church is unsympathetic. The church is with the world, with the things that are; it is not with those pilgrims who are still in that everlasting trudge seeking peace in a state where there are freedom and justice. When Christ died there were many tabernacles in the church. We do not know much about them now because the accounts we have of them have come down from their triumphant enemies who had to write not only to explain the rival creeds but to justify their own murderous tyrannies. But we know this much that frenzied visions of a hastening millennium, that burning glimpses of a reign of justice when the chaff was to be winnowed from the wheat and consumed by fire, brought the little communities of worshippers together and enabled their members to glory in persecution and martyrdom. In later times, the political Ana-

baptist movement in its extravagances and extremes raised the banner of the spirit against the sign-board of the flesh, toppled over into a gulf of frenzy and madness, but left a record in history which everyone who wanders amongst the further recesses of the human mind will read with care and find much profit from the exercises.

This age appears to be more stable. We are disillusioned; we know too much and yet not enough to be unsettled by the infinite distances which stretch beyond our extended world. We are like the early emigrant to America who thought the prairie endless, who could not grasp the vastness of the solid ground on which he stood and imagine it bounded by a Western as by an Eastern sea. Space to him was solid. We shall not perhaps become Montanists, we shall not re-found a Kingdom of God in Münster, but we have never forgotten, nor whilst we are human, shall we ever forget, the hunger and the thirst which drove men into such worships and ventures. They have returned to us now. As usual, they are met by the crowds which shouted for Barabbas and the money-changers who inspired them, with the cry of atheist, heretic, family-destroyer and such like, and the church hardly recognises the meaning of the agitation. The church, however, cannot serve both God and Mammon; it is not doing so now! A prominent politician said recently in the course

of a speech in favour of compulsory military service that it was absurd to appeal to Christ on the matter, for that, in the first place, the whole world did not follow Him, and, in the second place, many people who said they did, did not do so at all. We are so accustomed to assume that we are all Christians now, that we are altogether unprepared to look at the other side to which this speaker directed our attention.

I, therefore, do not take the view that the pews are emptying because those who used to fill them have ceased to care for what would be the gospel and the work of a good church. On the contrary, they care for that so much that they are ceasing to care for an Ephesian Church. The dogmas of retribution, which brought our fathers to worship, no longer whip us within church walls; the food provided for us does not fill, and so many of us turn elsewhere for spiritual refreshment. The church discusses us and condemns us; it changes its ritual; it comes down to the levels reached by the deteriorating grit of present-day society, only to find that it has reached shifting sands which run away from it and give it no abiding resting-place. If the church would only turn inwards upon its own faith and accept its own mission, some of its pews would still remain empty perhaps. But then, it would be Christians who would worship at its altars, whereas at present it is they who are drifting away.

III

By REV. PROFESSOR STALKER, D.D.

When I was in the Presbytery of Glasgow, we had once a debate on non-church-going, in which statements were made about the proportion of the working classes that had ceased to attend Church which sounded to me apocryphal and were, at all events, extremely depressing. A correspondence in the daily papers ensued, conceived in the same spirit and fitted to reduce to despair those concerned for the spiritual welfare of the city. While this was going on, there chanced to call on me, in reference to a lecture or some similar engagement, a workman employed in one of the best known shipyards on the Clyde. After our business was transacted, and as he was rising to go out, I detained him for a minute, and, without referring to the subject which had been haunting my thoughts, I asked him what proportion of the men in the shipyard where he worked were in the habit of attending Church; to which he replied, after considering for a few moments, "Ninety-five per cent." So utterly unlike was this to the representations with which the correspondence-columns of the

newspapers had for weeks been filled that I subjected him to a close and prolonged cross-examination; but he stuck to his assertion; and it came out that he had been long employed in the same place and was intimately acquainted with the habits of his fellow-workmen.

This incident has often recurred to my memory when I have read discussions on non-church-going in which the facts are taken for granted. Impressions as to the extent to which non-church-going prevails, or the degree in which it may be growing or diminishing, are seldom founded on very accurate inquiry; and consequently all kinds of subjective influences come in. Experience has led me to pay little attention, for example, to the complaints of elderly ministers about the declining state of the religion of the country; for these often mean no more than that the attendance at their own places of worship is falling off; and testimony from such a quarter ought to be balanced by an interview with a young minister in the first flush of enthusiasm and success. Exaggerated statements of a pessimistic character are to be deprecated; because they tend to bring about the state of things which they deplore.

In the deeply interesting and valuable address delivered by Mr Haldane at the opening of the session of the Theological Society in the New College, Edinburgh, recently, the lecturer attri-

buted to the working classes a mild agnosticism; and Matthew Arnold, to whom frequent reference was made in the same lecture, was wont to speak of a much more radical scepticism as being universally diffused through the same class. But an assistant of mine in Glasgow, who had been reading *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible,* while at the same time he was acting as missionary in a working-class district, where he had to do a great amount of visiting, wrote to the author, to inform him, that, in visiting eight hundred families, he had not come across scepticism in more than a couple of cases; and he elicited a letter in reply, in which it was confessed that the amount of unbelief among the working classes was apt to be exaggerated. One of our ablest ministers in Glasgow, who in a few years has attracted round himself a congregation of nearly eight hundred members, writes to me that, at the present time, scepticism, in the sense of reasoned doubt, is very rare indeed.

Undue discouragement may be caused by extending to the whole country conditions which prevail only in limited areas. Thus, multitudes of students and other young people have recently been studying social conditions in a book entitled *Social Degradation.* This is in many respects an able work, and it is written with immense earnestness and the best intentions; but, as a picture of

the condition of the working classes, it seems to me altogether misleading. It may be an accurate photograph of certain districts in London; but, if inexperienced readers take it for an account of what prevails generally, they will be totally mistaken; for hardly a glimpse is afforded of those among the working class—and these form the large majority—who earn honest wages and spend them well, or of the volume of religious influences flowing among even the poorest classes in at least the northern half of the island.

On a visit to the United States, I happened to be the guest of President M'Cosh at Princeton; and, in a conversation on the religious condition of his adopted country, that shrewd Scot remarked to me that all the denominations in America had failed to win "the big-headed mechanic." I was, however, able to assure him that, in his native land, all the churches still had a strong hold on this class; and he was delighted when I told him of a congregation in which I had preached in Glasgow, packed with people, where, at the close of the service, the minister, a man adorned with a profusion of academic degrees, informed me that in all that multitude there was not a single family that had a servant; and yet the congregation not only paid its own way but contributed handsomely to the general funds of the Church, while, under the lead of a large body of office-bearers, the

members were engaged in a host of evangelistic operations.

Of course, it is the pick of the working class that are to be found in congregations of this sort; and the shipyard to which reference was made at the commencement of this article is one where the employers are actively interested in the Church and the men have long been selected for their character. But there is a distinct danger lest, in our zeal to attract outsiders, we should lose those who are already in the Church. The casting of the net of the Gospel is a delicate operation; and, when it is not managed with a skilful hand, more may escape than are recovered from the sea. Regular attendance at church has a highly educational influence on the intellectual faculties; the discipline of regular work, well done, has a similar effect; the better class of mechanics have money in the bank and they are owners, or are becoming owners, of their own houses; and appeals of the kind into which a young minister may be betrayed, when he is filled with social passion and reading certain kinds of books on social subjects, may drive old hearers away, while the attempt is being made to attract new ones. Flattery of the working class will make an impression the reverse of favourable on such disciplined and thoughtful minds.

While some of the spokesmen of Labour never fail, on suitable occasions, to acknowledge how much

of the misery of the country is due to excessive expenditure on drink, there are others who are adopting a strange policy of silence on this subject; but those who themselves belong to the working class, but are sober and saving, know how hopeless it is to speak of welfare for such as expend on strong drink as much as must make the whole difference between comfort and penury. Still less likely to win the same class is the attempt to identify Jesus Christ with extreme views on social questions. As I write, I am in the middle of an able work, which is obtaining a wide circulation, where the Son of man appears as a Socialist and Communist. When He says, "Woe to you that are rich," this is interpreted literally and pushed home to its uttermost consequences; but, when He says, "Blessed are ye poor," this is by no means taken literally: on the contrary, poverty is treated as the worst of curses; and the claim of the labouring classes to a larger share of the wealth of the country is urged with a ferocity as great as has ever been displayed by those at the opposite end of the social scale in acquiring or retaining their riches. The author of this book is a minister; and it is possible that by addresses conceived in this spirit some outsiders may be caught; but working men who are independent and thoughtful will desire the Name that is above every name to be kept out of the disputes and partisanships of the passing hour.

I am aware that I am speaking from a narrow point of view and as a member of one branch of the Church. The success of the Gospel in Scotland has been miserably incomplete, and the alienation from the Church of vast numbers of the population ought to fill the hearts of all Christian patriots with shame and remorse. Yet in what other land has the church a firmer hold on the population in general or the working class in particular? In other countries and in other branches of the Church other methods have been tried; and, in so far as these have been successful, they deserve study and imitation; but they have not been more successful than our native methods; and, therefore, it is probably by improving and adapting these, rather than by pursuing after novelties, that lost ground is to be recovered and the evangelization of the whole country carried out.

Presbyterianism is specially suitable for the needs of the working class, if only the system in all its parts is worked with energy and wisdom.

Free prayer, for instance, will always be more acceptable to this class than liturgical worship. I have heard the Bishop of Kensington, in an English cathedral and before a largely clerical audience, express doubt whether the Book of Common Prayer, though unspeakably dear to those accustomed to it from childhood, was likely to attract outsiders into the Church. Continual repetition of the same

petitions wearies the common man, and he fails to keep his attention awake to the words. In free prayer, on the contrary, there is variety, and the mind can adapt itself to the events of Providence. But excessive length is a great temptation; and those who have to lead in the prayers of the sanctuary should aim at half the usual length and yet double the amount of matter. The most important qualification of all is a profound belief in the religious nature of the hearers, which must in prayer find both expression and nurture. "The study of psychology, as well as the study of history, shows conclusively that the religious instinct is as permanent and abiding an element in human character as love, hope, or hunger for food. The fact that some men and women do not possess it only proves that some men and women are incomplete according to normal human standards. There are those without an ear for music; there are others whose vision lacks range and perspective; there are some with no sense of taste or smell; but the melody of a chorale, the beauty of a landscape or the fragrance of a garden of roses is not affected thereby. The normal man, whose development has been whole, balanced and uniform, has within him those instincts which have manifested themselves in the faith, the forms, the creeds and the spiritual aspirations of religion; and the man who lacks these instincts is on the same plane as

he who lacks the sense of melody or the sense of perspective or of smell." These are the words of a Labour-leader,[1] and I cannot better them.

Still more attractive to working men of the thoughtful type is preaching; and on this Presbyterian worship has always laid peculiar emphasis. Only it must be done well. The preacher must have a message, and he must honour it by finding out, week after week, the best vehicle for its delivery. This requires incessant toil; it requires art; it requires acquaintance with human nature and sympathy with human conditions; but it appeals to instincts which are as old as humanity and are found among both civilised and uncivilised.

In books from the pens of the spokesmen of Labour, such as the one just quoted, I find themes desiderated in the pulpit which, it is alleged, would be peculiarly acceptable to working-class audiences. The one most frequently mentioned is the Life of Christ; and who can doubt that that human character, that unwearying course of benevolence, those matchless parables and other words of insight and beauty contain a peculiar charm for all in whom there is any element of discernment or aspiration? Even those among the working class who have many rough terms for Christianity, in the sense of the historical organization, profess for the man Christ Jesus an unbounded

[1] Frederick Roberts in *Labour and Religion*.

respect and admiration ; and this should be enough for a preacher as a beginning.

Another desideratum often expressed, is a Gospel which has the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come. Nothing could be more just. Even if there were no life to come, Christ and His religion would be the best possession any human being could have in this world ; and the version of the Christian salvation delivered from the pulpit has often, in the past, been too ghostly and unearthly. If some, resenting this, are disposed to rush to the opposite extreme, speaking as if the life to come were of little account, a preacher can have patience with them ; for, if they are really willing to be introduced to Christ, it is easy to show how much His thoughts dwelt on the future ; and it is easy, too, to prove that eternity answers to one of the deepest instincts in the human breast.

The Presbyterian government is democratic. The Church is not a one-man concern, but is ruled by laymen. In a congregation of a thousand members there will be not far short of a hundred office-bearers ; and the elders exercise their office not only in the congregation, but in the presbytery, the synod and the general assembly ; questions of the most intimate and spiritual kind—even the orthodoxy of teachers—being submitted to their judgment It is sometimes alleged that, in the

election of office-bearers, money and social standing weigh unduly with the voters, and that the humbler members have little chance. But my experience has been precisely the reverse.

I well remember how surprised I was, as a young minister, to see men of outstanding social position again and again passed over, if they did not possess the qualification of spirituality; and it is nothing unusual to see employer and employed sitting side by side in the same session. Differences of social station afford no clue to the course which such men will follow on almost any question, the line of cleavage being determined by considerations of a totally different nature. In the eldership of the Scottish Church is to be found the very cream of the population for character and efficiency. This is partly due to the care with which the selection is made and partly to the duties which have to be discharged after election; for the responsibilities of office react upon character. These include not only financial questions and the arrangement of the services of religion, including the sacraments, but the relief of the poor, the visitation of the sick, and the oversight of the young. Office-bearers are aware that their conduct is watched by many with a reverent and imitative eye; and this renders them circumspect in their walk and conversation; it might, of course, tempt to hypocrisy, and this is a danger to be guarded against; but I have never

known this vice to be charged, in any considerable degree, on Scottish elders.

One of the principal duties with which office-bearers charge themselves ought to be the providing of work in the Church for the members. They ought to be not only busy themselves but the organizers of the labours of others. It is to be feared that there are many members in the Church who are doing little or nothing to extend the kingdom of God but, if challenged, like the labourers in the parable, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" could answer, "Because no man hath hired us." The office-bearers of a congregation ought to be the hirers of labourers into the vineyard. They ought to be able to fit talent to task, by finding out what requires to be done and knowing the qualifications of the various persons under their charge. This makes not only a strong but a happy congregation; for here also the maxim of the Lord applies, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

The attachment of members to a Church is not in proportion to what they get from it but to what they give to it. This is the kind of congregation which working people should join—one where their services will be claimed and their gifts exercised. They can begin to exercise these at once; because one of the most obvious and profitable services they can render is to fill the place of

worship by taking thither their friends and companions. There is no mistake by which the progress of the Gospel has been more retarded in the past than the hallucination that the Christianization of the world was to be the work of an ordained and salaried class. At the beginning it was not so ; and it is becoming manifest that, however missionaries and ministers may be multiplied, neither the foreign nor the home mission of the Church can be accomplished solely by this means. Not till everyone who names the name of Christ is thereby pledged to be a witness to the faith that is in him, wherever his lot may be cast, will the Gospel again spread as it did in apostolic days ; but, when this stage is reached, there will be no need for Christians to vex their souls with the problem of non-church-going.

IV

By F. HERBERT STEAD, M.A.

The evolution of mankind into the Kingdom of God has been advancing during the last hundred years with extraordinary rapidity. That stretch of time is but a moment in the being of Man upon this planet: yet into it seem to have been packed whole ages of progress. It has seen the abolition of slavery, an infamy dating from an immemorial antiquity. It has seen the beginnings of democracy: the power of the State passing into the hands of man as man: and—still more significant—the well-nigh universal subjection of woman giving way to her equal citizenship. The larger franchise of the mind which comes of education is being claimed more and more by the most widely diverse populations of the globe. The education of India and the education of China, for example, which are on the threshold of accomplishment, mean the intellectual emancipation of nearly half the human race. The Labour Movement all round the world demands for the toilers, with a power and persistency unknown before, a fuller share in the good things of life. The century has, in a word,

seen the labouring millions emancipated, educated, enfranchised, and about to be enriched. Science has burst into blossom and borne fruit which fills the world with a new life of mastery in thought and deed. The earth has been fully explored: all parts of it brought into swift intercommunication: electrical devices have conferred on mankind a simultaneity of consciousness and evoked a reciprocal sensitiveness that is world-wide. All the Governments of the world, by uniting to establish a tribunal for the settlement of international disputes, have made a beginning of the end of war, and have created a nucleus of that Universal State which is the political expression of the Kingdom of God. In a hundred years the dictum that humanity is one organism has passed from being a dream of the mystic or a theorem of the philosopher: it has become almost an immediate perception of the average man.

Amid all these unparalleled changes, the social expression of Religion could not remain unaffected. A period which has revolutionised our science, our industry, our politics, and which has transformed as by an earthquake the whole landscape of human life, is bound to bring about important departures from the traditional manifestations of the Highest Life. The evolution of the Kingdom, in swift whirl of onward movement, must change men's thought and action towards old forms of religious com-

munion. There is bound to be dissatisfaction, sense of maladjustment, cleavage, possibly alienation for a time, even revulsion. The old clothes are becoming too tight for the growing limbs. Much that perplexes and dismays devout ecclesiastics to-day is, after all, an inevitable incident in the expanding Life of the kingdom.

There are undoubtedly present a great number of elements that are not of the Kingdom. There is a restless thirst for pleasure, to which worship seems a routine of utter tedium. There is a revolt against the salutary restraints of public worship: the silence, the decorum, the mental application that are demanded. There is a positive hatred of being regularly confronted with high ideals and stern obligations which there is no intention to fulfil. There is the natural repugnance of the frivolous, sensual, selfish soul to facing thoughts of duty, self-sacrifice, eternity, God. To contemplate, however woodenly and afar off, the white Perfectness of the Object of Worship is to make the self-loving worshipper conscious of his stains and spots, and consequently most uncomfortable: and naturally he avoids this occasion of discomfort. There are many who have so far atrophied their finer sense that the great words and deeds of Religion have to them simply no meaning.

But all these factors in our problem have been constant. In all ages there have doubtless been

large numbers of minds which felt a real indisposition for public worship. But this indisposition was conquered by two opposite feelings. One was a more or less slavish dread of the penalties which a neglected Deity might here or hereafter inflict. The other was the fear of social reaction in the form of legal punishment or general odium inflicted by the leaders of society.

At the present day in England both these countervailing forces have almost, if not entirely, ceased to act. Probably no Englishman now believes that if he does not go to church in this life he will certainly go to hell in the next. So the men who a generation ago went to church to avoid going later to a destination still more disagreeable now consider themselves excused from putting in an appearance at either place. They spend Sunday "as they please."

The social constraint is equally weak. Only in rare circles does anyone really lose caste by not attending public worship. The non-church-goer experiences no social inconvenience on that account. The natural indisposition which has prevailed in thousands of men through all generations is now free to act. And congregations dwindle accordingly. But in these cases—and they are very numerous—public worship is no more distasteful than it used to be. The desire for religious communion stands at what it stood before, namely, at

zero. The case of school attendance is by no means parallel, but is in some respects similar. A very large number of boys always had and still have the deepest repugnance to attending school. Nothing but parental coercion—now backed by the State —sends them or keeps them there. Supposing that State and parent ceased to exercise compulsion, there would at once be a great drop in school attendance. But in the hearts of the now unmenaced truants there would be no more hatred of school than formerly. Worship obviously cannot be exacted as instruction can be imparted, by compulsion; so the absence of the unwilling worshipper is not necessarily a sign of any greater spiritual deterioration in him.

At the same time, even forced attendance at church may and often does exert a moral constraint on the life. I heard not long ago of a rugged adventurer who was taking a party of pioneers on a commercial expedition in East Africa. His men, too, were adventurers, loose of morals and wild of life. Though by no means a devout church-goer himself, he found it necessary, for the purposes of his expedition, to compel his men to attend church service. Their compulsory attendance checked some of their worst excesses during the week, and so kept them fit for their work. His method of compulsion was short and simple. It was contained in the formula, "No church, no grog." To

get the grog, his men went to church, and so preserved their industrial efficiency. They were physically and morally better men for being forced to join in public worship. A similar motive may have led the German Emperor to require his troops every morning to repeat the Lord's Prayer. Nevertheless, forced worship, however useful for other purposes, is no worship.

It is the perception of this truth which helps to answer our next question, "Why has social constraint ceased?" The collective terror of the Divine Exactor has gone. But social conventions with no supernatural sanctions behind them still possess a formidable power. They are upheld, as in the case of uncomfortable fashions of dress, by the supposed status or by the moral weight of those who practise them. And the fashion of church-going might have remained as inexorable as the fashion of wearing hats out of doors, long after the fear of Hell had departed. But even the example of those in high station or of great moral prestige is losing its power in this particular. There is an atmosphere of feeling abroad that worship, like love, to which it is closely akin, must be spontaneous if it be at all. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Faith diffused through the community has opened the pew door to many an undevout prisoner of fashion. So those who

are in earnest, the moral and religious leaders of society, whose demands in other directions are obeyed, however reluctantly, by the timid and the frivolous, no longer insist on the forced attendance of unwilling worshippers.

But possibly the abstention of those who follow social bell-wethers would not be so prevalent if all avowed and earnest religious men and women were entirely convinced of the obligation and value of public worship as at present conducted. But are they so convinced? Here we reach the real crux of our inquiry. If all serious-minded Christians were as absolutely decided about the need and duty of uniting in weekly worship as of sitting down to their daily meal, the intense glow of their conviction would shed a twilight of social feeling for church-going over thousands otherwise content to lie in the darkness of utter indifference. But one of the signs of the times is the dissatisfaction or positive distaste felt towards the conventional exercises of devotion—not by the frivolous or sequacious, but by many who are high-principled and earnest-hearted. It is this cleavage which demands close study.

As my lot is chiefly cast among working men, I may be pardoned if I put the case as it appears to them. What they feel may not be very different from what moves in less outspoken minds in other classes.

The working man has more than the usual share of what Emerson calls the Englishman's "eye for fact." He has a keen sense of reality: he is trained to it by the hard facts of life. It is made all the keener by the scientific atmosphere that tinges modern society. And he complains that public worship in most of the churches strikes him as *unreal*, does not touch real life as he knows it. It moves in what seems to him a region of abstraction. The "language of Canaan" is certainly not the language of the street, or of the workshop. But there is more than difference of vocabulary. Things that to him matter nothing are dwelt upon at length, but the things that to him matter very much are not mentioned.

Not long ago, to give a single instance, he found parsons preaching with frantic earnestness and churches bubbling over with rival fervours on the question, how much or how little of certain abstruse dogmas should be taught to the children in the public elementary schools. And at that very time he knew there were thousands of children forced into those public elementary schools in a state of positive starvation. Yet he heard no sermon demanding that Christ's lambs be fed, or insisting on the plain human justice of not forcing on unnourished brains tasks beyond their power. It all seemed unreal to him: such tremendous earnestness about subtle and shadowy

doctrines, such stony-hearted indifference to plain human needs. Outside the churches he would find a Socialist agitator putting the case for the underfed children with point and power. That was real to him: the other was not. "Sacerdotalism" and "anti-sacerdotalism" were cries that seemed to him utterly meaningless beside the cry of the children for bread.

And earnest laymen of the middle classes lament on kindred grounds the air of unreality which hangs about pulpit and pew. Hymns and lessons, sermons and sacraments, which demand as their fitting sequel a life of devout sacrifice, ending, maybe, in a martyr's death, actually eventuate in nothing more heroic than the promenade homeward of a well-dressed crowd, with the undisturbed prospect before them of comfortable lunch and luxurious indolence. The utmost that seems to be expected of them, after appeals that summon to the Cross, is to *be* respectable, to *look* devout, and, if the preacher is very impressive, to "*feel* good" —for a quarter of an hour.

Once, on the eve of entering into Settlement life, I preached my soul out to a suburban congregation, enforcing the duty of Christian households to take up their abode among the poor. A few months afterwards I met a gentleman who was in that congregation, and he said, "I have missed you from these northern heights. Where are you living now?" I

answered, "In Walworth, of course." He literally staggered back in surprise: "What! Gone with wife and children to live there?" "Yes," I rejoined; "do you not remember my preaching in your church, and urging it was our duty, if we were free, to live among the poor?" "I remember perfectly," he said, "but I never expected you to do it." And he added with a smile, "We allow large licence of exhortation to the pulpit." Such an utterance, alas! does not stand alone.

Is the assumption not too general that neither preacher nor hearer is expected to "mean business" by even the most fervid appeals? Do not too many congregations complacently acquiesce in the feeling that they are met to cultivate a sterile rapture, and a rapture that is meant to be sterile, rather than to generate effective purpose; that their aim is reached in the sentimental joy of playing with high and heroic ideals which they have not the slightest intention of putting into practice? Such an ecclesiastical atmosphere is as offensive to the earnest soul as a sickly perfume is to the healthy nostril.

Purposed unreality is not, however, by any means the worst of the things that make honest men hesitate about going to church. Working men, and not working men alone, are loud in their complaint of the glaring contradiction between the professions and the practice of the worshippers.

Thanks to the simple Bible instruction given in our public elementary schools, the common people have received a first-hand knowledge they never wholly lose, of the life and teachings of Jesus. They cannot escape the contrast offered to the Gospels by the ordinary church. They know that Jesus' relations to the poor and the rich are exactly reversed by the church. Jesus declared Himself Anointed to bring good tidings to the poor; declared the Kingdom of God to belong to the poor; presented to the Baptist, as the crowning credential of His Christhood, that the poor had the good tidings brought to them. The church to-day provides for the rich the best buildings, the best music, the best oratory it can buy: for the poor it plants a back street mission, which is kept in a half-starved condition on the few crumbs that fall from the table of religious opulence. Jesus said, "Blessed are ye poor," but "Woe unto you that are rich." The church, on the contrary, pities the poor, patronises the poor, adulates and extols the rich. The wealthiest member, not the best, is "the pillar of the church." The need of money for the "maintenance of the ordinances of worship" makes the rich man so much run-after that it is scarcely his fault if he comes to believe that he can buy the pulpit as well as the pew, and a well-furnished mansion in the Heavenly Jerusalem to boot.

Jesus Himself and His Apostles twelve were resolutely and of set purpose poor men : while some of His foremost modern advocates are resolutely and of set purpose rich men. The working man reads of the official followers of the Nazarene drawing annual stipends that run into four and sometimes five figures. He reads of immense sums left at death by ministers of religion. And he also reads fervid appeals which state that the redemption of the poor and the evangelization of the world are checked and crippled for want of money. The working man, too, knows, or thinks he knows, how the wealth that is so courted by the church has too often been produced. It is not the individual Dives to which most exception is taken—the "prosperous deacon" who "sweats" his workmen, the clergyman who is rich in brewery shares, or the church whose endowments include slum property and houses of shame : it is the support given by the ecclesiastical forces as a whole to the unjust system of distribution which "shelters the noble and crushes the poor." The record of the votes cast in the House of Lords by the Bench of Bishops is often cited as proof of the strident discrepancy that prevails between organised Christianity and the Sermon on the Mount.

The intelligent working man has generally decided views upon war, and, like Hosea Biglow, thinks he "need go no furder than his Testament for that,"

yet the blessing of the church is always forthcoming on any war in which the nation engages. When the country was betrayed into the vast crime of the South African war, the churches, as churches, made no protest: they were all dumb dogs. But the Trade Union Congress, which makes no profession of Christian faith, denounced the international outrage with prophetic zeal. These things produce in the mind of many honest toilers an impression that the existing Church is a monstrous distortion, a self-conscious sham, "an organized hypocrisy."

These complaints and criticisms, which are continually finding utterance among working men, may be felt by many readers to be unjust, crude, indiscriminate, lacking in historical perspective; they may appear—especially to holders of fat livings! —cruelly uncharitable. I do not write either to defend them or to denounce them. I write to insist that they are there, and that they spring not from lack of faith in Jesus Christ or of reverence for Him: they spring, on the contrary, and however irregularly, from some of the best influences with which the Kingdom of God has leavened humanity.

These judgments are only attempts, however clumsy, to judge the Church by its Founder. If Joseph Parker of the City Temple could say: "The pulpit is the paid slave of respectable society," a devout outsider may be excused for pronouncing

the Church to be too often more the servant of Mammon than the servant of God. The heart of many a working man leaps in response to the sentiment uttered by Pastor Kutter, of Zürich, when he says, "The Church and Socialism have changed places. The latter now leads the fight against Mammon which the former should have led, had it not gone over to the enemy." Kutter goes on to say, "Seeing the Church subjugated by Mammon, Socialists have become atheists." The revulsion felt by many English working men does not drive them into atheism; but, while they retain their faith, they stand outside of all the churches.

I once heard a working man in Victoria Park, in the East End of London, who had silenced a dogmatist in discussion, and who was challenged to say, "What do you believe, then?" roar out in a voice of thunder, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I don't believe in none of your sects and denominations!" To his view it was faith, not want of faith, that kept him out of the orthodox fold. I have known humble and devout believers among the working classes who for years never crossed church or chapel door, because within the door they had found a spirit so entirely alien to the Mind of the Master.

The individualism of much of the religion that is preached and practised in too many churches is another element that has been outgrown and

rendered distasteful by the pervasive influence of the Kingdom of God. It is specially abhorrent to the mind of the working man who has found social salvation by means of Trade Union, Friendly Society, organized labour in all its forms. Like Arnold of Rugby, he "will not be saved alone." Even in the Highest Presence, he still thinks of his mates. He feels with rough but resolute grasp after the truth: "he that will save his soul, the same shall lose it." He has a dim sense that the passionate emphasis laid upon saving one's own soul is too often merely sanctified selfishness. The great principle of solidarity which is a modern echo of the Kingdom makes him feel not at home in places of worship where he hears "God and the individual soul, the individual soul and God," extolled as the supreme relation of life.

The rising tide of the Kingdom is, moreover, sweeping away many hoary conventions as to the conduct of public worship. The prayer of Moses, "would that all the Lord's people were prophets" is being fulfilled in ways undreamt of by our fathers. The New Covenant which puts the law of God in the inward parts and writes it on the heart of every man is emerging into a wide fulness of expression. The inner life tends to find voice through every vocal soul. And the functions of teaching, prophecy, pastoral admonition and evangelism are being ever more widely distributed. Witness the vast array

of speakers which every week makes audible to more than a half-million of men assembled in Sunday afternoon Brotherhoods throughout the land the Message of God which has come to them.

Men feel, however dimly, that every true man is an ethical expert, and, if he have the gift of utterance, is qualified to guide his fellows. He has verified the law of life in his particular vocation, and so far forth can speak with authority. Hence the average business man is more ready to receive spiritual direction from a fellow business man of unimpeachable Christian character than from any cleric. The working man welcomes the Gospel from the lips of a Labour leader, but shuns it as spoken by the priest. The politician is more impressed by the religious utterances of a Gladstone or a Roosevelt than by the allocutions of prelate or popular preacher.

Nor is the specifically religious gathering the only occasion on which the voice of the Spirit is heard. Time and time again, on purely secular and political platforms, in crowded hall or in the yet more democratic park, I have listened to appeals as fervid to follow the Christ and carry out His Will as ever have rung in my ears under "the high embowèd roof" of our stateliest fanes of prayer. These evangelic words have come from the lips of the untutored sons of toil. Nay, I remember one of the best of such speeches that spoke out the heart's

faith of a music-hall comedian. Men that have drunk the wine of life from these rough-hewn cisterns may not care next day to receive it from official though maybe far more cultured lips.

The Adult Schools that sprang from the best life of the Society of Friends and have gathered together thousands of working men in all parts of the country furnish another proof that the River of God is now too full of water to be confined within the old ecclesiastical dams. Let anyone hear a group of earnest working men discussing together on a Sunday morning what veritably is meant for them to-day by the great words of the Sermon on the Mount, and he will realise that he is in a confraternity of the Kingdom, and that every voice around him is a vehicle of one and the self-same Spirit. The leaders of the Adult Schools are among the first to bear witness that they have been taught, moved, inspired by the Spirit as it has reached them through the lips of the lowliest and least cultured of their school-mates.

Perhaps one of the strangest developments of the life of the Kingdom, and, as many would have supposed, the least to be expected in the breathless, hurrying, bustling age in which we live, is the new demand for social silence. Perhaps this is a further realisation of the New Covenant foretold by Jeremiah, under which " they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother,

saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." Perhaps men who meet together in the Name of the Highest are coming to prefer social intercourse with Him in silence to uninterrupted volleys of speech. Perhaps the most earnest minds are growing tired of being "preached to death by wild curates," or by even tamer and more august varieties of the same species. They would teach no man his brother: rather would they be together—consciously but silently together—in the Presence of God.

Not the one or two rare souls in individual transports of devotion, but companies of men, are beginning to be "rapt into the still communion that transcends the imperfect offices of praise and prayer." The age in which we live sends messages without the aid of wire over land and sea. The mystery of telepathy remains as yet unexplained, but remains a fact. When men and women meet together keyed to the same high tone of faith and hope and love, then surely might they, do they feel the walls of their separateness fall down, the deeps below broken up, the windows of heaven opened, and in the overflowing tide of Divine Life find themselves One. In this collective mersion of believing souls in the one Life, is not worship most truly realised? The consciousness of God, Who is over all and through all and in all, goes far

beyond all possibility of speech; and it is this social consciousness of God for which mankind was made and is increasingly athirst. The thirst once so kindled cannot be slaked in the cumbrous and external modes of our ancestral worship.

This discovery of the Divine potencies of social silence seems to have dawned upon the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh like a revelation. Soul wedded itself with soul, ere soul could wed itself with speech, in the union of the collective heart with God. Speech may be employed, symbol may find its place, all the accessories of oratory and music may serve their lower ends: but the fellowship of the Kingdom of God must rise, like its Master, above all the sounds and noises of the lower sphere to the mountain top of silent interpenetration of soul between the worshippers and God.

So the leaven of the Kingdom is transforming our noisy West into new possibilities of communion with the contemplative East. Probably from our brothers in India, and other lands of mystic contemplation, when born into the Kingdom of God, the West will learn the worship of the future, compared with which all our transports of revivalism, our enthusiasm of ecclesiastical congresses, our deep social adoration before Mass or Sacrament will seem but like the first streaks of dawn before the glory of the Divine meridian.

Let us "follow the gleam." But let us not cut the vital thread that links the present with the best that is to be, by severing ourselves from even the most rudimentary form of spiritual intercourse, however hard, wooden, green or sour it may be. Religious fellowship propagates itself not like thistledown; it grows like the cedar or the oak. Mr Keir Hardie is not quite what one might call a bigoted champion of traditional usages. Yet his advice to working men is this, "To those of you who are in Christian Churches I would say, Remain inside and make the Church more worthy of Christ than it has been." The Kingdom of God rises through first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. Because the blade is turning into straw, and the ear is becoming chaff, let not the impatient modern imagine that "the full corn in the ear" can be manufactured in his private laboratory.

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By REV. J. ERNEST RATTENBURY

It is generally assumed to-day that great masses of people in England, particularly working men, are becoming increasingly alienated from the organised churches. It is possible to take too pessimistic a view of this alienation, but it must be granted that vast numbers of people pass the church door compared with those who cross its threshold. It is possible to exaggerate the extent of the alienation; it is equally possible to exaggerate its quality. This alienation does not seem to arise from any deep-rooted hostility to religion. In this country, at least, there is very little of the hatred of the church such as exists amongst Continental working-men. So far as the relation of the outsider is concerned, it might almost be called one of benevolent neutrality towards religion. But while no bitter hatred exists to more than a negligible extent, the indifference of great numbers of the people to the church—and to the claims of the Christian religion, is perhaps even more difficult to counteract. It is not so much that the people find religion

hateful as that they find the churches useless! They have no hunger for what the church provides. It seems to them out of correspondence with their needs. They have a deep-lying suspicion that it does not represent the Christ, for Whom the vast majority of people in this country still retain a profound respect, and they have a dislike—perhaps more sub-conscious than conscious—of ecclesiastical organisation and form.

But with all this it cannot be allowed that the people of this country are in any sense pagan. Their ideals are the Christian ideals; their sentiments are the Christian sentiments; and their moral standards on the whole are high Christian standards. They condemn the things that Christ would condemn, and they praise the things that Christ would praise. Amongst the educated men alienated from the churches there is a wistful idealism which is always ready for expression. A remarkable instance of this is the recently formed Agenda Club. This Club has apparently arisen in answer to an appeal in the *Hibbert Journal* to English gentlemen, and its object is to organise idealistic persons with a view of finding scope for their idealism in various types of social service. Is this not to say that the Christian sentiment which does not find the Church of Jesus Christ for various reasons congenial is still wishful to express itself for the good of others?

Any worker amongst the poor is struck by their deep fund of really Christian generosity. The kindness of the poor to the poor is one of the brightest features of English life, and even when they are unconscious of it they are profoundly influenced by Christian sentiment. This is probably true of other countries than our own. No one saw this more clearly than that great modern critic of Christianity—Friedrich Nietzsche. He felt that Christianity had not been got rid of even if Christian dogma had.

"Nietzsche went to the very foundation of the Christian edifice. He pointed to its morality and said, If we are going to measure the value of this religion let us cease our petty quarrels concerning the truth or falsehood of such stories as the loss of the Gadarene swine, and let us throw the whole of Christian morality into the scale and appraise its precise worth as a system of ethics."[1] He attacks Christian morality.

Nietzsche realised that the modern standards of men were essentially Christian, and he made his war upon that humanitarianism which he felt was the chief obstacle in the way of the superman.

Again it must be remembered that the alienation of the masses from the churches is partially due to social and economic causes. There is a general feeling that the Church is a great conservative

[1] *Nietzsche.* By A. M. Ludovici, p. 37.

power and its history would certainly go to show that in its organised form it almost invariably stands for the "powers that be." One of the ironies of history is the curious opposition between the spirit and the organisation of the Church in different ages. Where the great human movements have been almost always spiritually traceable to some Christian source the same movements have often been obstructed by the actual Christian organisations. As Mr Parton Milum says :

"The accepted religion of the Western world to-day is on the whole a conserving force supported powerfully, even by those who take no part in it, as sustaining the social order. Even Imperialists are not afraid of encouraging its propagation amongst the lower races. The conclusion has therefore been drawn that religion is essentially and universally a conserving force, and so it follows an awakening proletariat, becoming conscious of itself, conceives it is in antagonism to all religion. If the present social order is permanent, if a proletariat is forever a necessity, they are hopeless. Whatever of faith and hope is theirs is towards change." [1]

If this observation be true, it is not difficult to understand much of the temporary alienation from the churches. It is quite likely that the rapid social evolution of recent years has more to do with this alienation of the people from the

[1] *Revolutionary Christianity*, p. 10.

churches than anyone has realised. It is generally felt amongst working people that the churches stand for capital. Mr Richard Heath some years ago in his striking work, *The Captive City of God*, argued that the church's chief loss had been its alienation from the democratic ideal. He felt that the Church of England stood for the interests of the upper classes, and the Nonconformist Churches stood for the interests of the middle classes.

Anyone who candidly examines the church life of England to-day must at least allow that there is a great deal in this criticism. In speaking to large audiences of working men I have always found that the one criticism of the churches with which they sympathise was that they were not democratic enough. They feel that there is an air of patronage in many of the churches towards the worker. It is not that he would not be treated kindly if he entered them, but he feels that he is treated with the kindness of the superior person, and this he deeply resents. He feels that in the various upper-class and middle-class institutions, which masquerade under the name of the Christian Church to-day, there is a spirit antagonistic to the spirit of Jesus. It is not that he is hostile to all class distinctions, but being a plain man he is not sufficiently ingenious to reconcile class distinctions with the teaching of Jesus Christ. In the church, at least, he demands equality. He

does not think that he receives it there. He is very sensitive on this point and I believe often misinterprets the motives of the people with whom he has to do.

But a little reflection will show that the working man's attitude is by no means an unnatural one. It is due largely to his growing consciousness of dignity and power. It is easy to find concrete instances of this in different parts of the country. There are great industrial centres, for example, in which the manufacturers of half a century ago were generally Nonconformists. Their relation to their workmen was often kindly and paternal. They erected chapels very largely at their own expense. Their workmen were to be found in the chapels on Sundays as well as in the factories on Mondays, and it would have been almost impossible for master and workman to have been other than master and workman on Sunday as well as on Monday. The rise of the limited liability company on the side of capital, and the growing consciousness of personal dignity on the side of labour, has made this relation difficult in very many places. The authority of the master on Sunday has been resented. The tradition of the benevolent despot in the chapel has been carried on by the smaller despot who is not benevolent under the new social conditions. The workers have made their demands as Christian

brothers in the church. These demands have been resented. The result is that in many industrial districts the workers are found outside the churches combining very often in social fellowships, still respecting, and sometimes worshipping the Christ, but unable to understand His Church.

Some regard must be given to the onslaughts of scepticism on Christianity, but probably not very much. There is no widespread *dis*belief in Christ although there is widespread *un*belief. The general unrest of the age has of course touched the masses of the people, but it has not so far profoundly influenced them. The influence of sceptical teaching is likely to be greater in the future than in the past, because the more the people become as a whole alienated from the church the more likely are they to be influenced by rationalism. Dislike of the church, distrust of it as a social expression of the ideals of the upper and middle classes have much more to do with this alienation than any positive rationalist attack on Jesus Christ.

It must also be remembered that the social ideals of the churches express themselves in services that do not appeal to the people whose social ideal is different. There can be no doubt that many of the people of England are alienated from the Anglican Church for the simple reason that they do not like the Liturgy. To appreciate the Liturgy of

the Anglican Church needs an education in that Liturgy, and a sense of strangeness and loneliness would come over any man who went to an Anglican church for the first time.

Again in very many Nonconformist pulpits there is an assumption of culture on the part of the preacher which does not exist to any great extent in his congregation, and normally cannot exist, for the simple reason that the preacher's culture is of quite a special type and very often is of no broad interest at all. It is not that the people care to have clap-trap and nonsense talked to them; it is not that anything less than the very best will do for them, but in a great deal of our church life the service expresses the culture of a very narrow type of intellect. There are people who object to the vulgarity of Charles Dickens, but they are small people. Charles Dickens appeals to our common humanity. He appeals to that which is common to the most refined and the least cultured persons. He appeals to the heart of man. That is but a dim illustration of the appeal of Christ. The churches, as they exist to-day, too often appeal to narrow tastes, to the culture of the day or oftener to the culture and ideals of the day before yesterday, and the great masses of the people do not understand and are not very tolerant, and no wonder!

Another thing which alienates people from the church is the desire which many have not to commit themselves. They do not like the restraints that some churches put upon them, and this the church cannot always avoid, for the restraints of confession are of the very nature of Christianity.

Perhaps another general cause of this alienation is to be found in the wider interests of the people. Not so very long ago, for many people there were only two possible centres of interest. The one was the church or chapel, and the other was the public house. In many places even now the chapel is the centre of the people's life, its social as well as its religious life, the only thing which brightens the monotony of a drab existence. In our own day the interests and the enthusiasms of the people have been greatly widened. Their amusements are much more numerous and much less vicious. The modern type of decent music hall, the cinematograph entertainment, and the football field, appeal to decent people and excite their enthusiasm and interest, whereas in times past the appeal to their interest was much more limited.

The general attitude of the outsider to religion may be said to be one of neglect, but not of hostility, while his attitude towards the church is one of suspicion, for which the church is not altogether irresponsible.

Perhaps the important matter is not so much

to consider the general causes of the alienation of the people from the churches amongst themselves, causes which are to some extent in the nature of the case irremediable, but to ask how far the church itself is responsible for this alienation. It will be generally agreed that the feeling of the people of England towards the church and the feeling of the people of England towards Christ are two different things. No proposition is more commonly assented to than that "the people of England are not hostile to Christ; they are hostile to the churches." Even evangelists tell people not to look at the church but to look at Christ. They repudiate the church as if it were not Christian, and they argue that the masses of the people are doing wrong in criticising the church instead of turning to Christ.

It may be admitted there is some truth in this. But are the people altogether wrong? After all, what is the church if it is not the Body of Christ? Is not the body that which is visible to any man? There must be something fundamentally wrong about the church if it is necessary to tell people not to look at the church but to look at Christ. If they cannot love the church which they have seen are they likely to love the Christ Whom they have not seen. If the church is in any true sense the Body of Christ it is the embodiment of the *Spirit* of Christ. It is the

organisation by which Christ manifests Himself, and through which Christ works. The people naturally feel that the Body of Christ in the twentieth century ought to be like the Body of Christ in the first century. In this case the church will express itself in all the merciful activities of its Lord and will be in deepest sympathy with the common people. People sometimes say that rich people need the church as well as the poor. Of course they do! They need the Christian teaching quite as much. Jesus Christ had a mission to the rich as well as to the poor. His mission is to humanity, and if the church which embodies the spirit of Jesus acted as Jesus did towards both the rich and the poor it would not be the poor who criticised it.

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, others say, is simply concerned with the proclamation of high spiritual truths, of which it is the depository. This again is one of those misleading half truths with which many people deceive themselves. Can it be established that the only way of proclaiming those truths is by the lips? They must be proclaimed by the life. Something more than the proclamation of the grace of God by the preacher is needed. The world believes the church's proclamation of the love of God to men when the church loves men. That is why it believed in the proclamation of His Father's love by Jesus.

If the church is the Body of Christ to-day, the church will only convince the world of God's love by loving the world. We need the church to-day which believes itself to be the Body of Christ. But can we honestly say this is the ideal of actual churches? Have not many churches in our age become hopelessly commercialised? We call them interests and causes, and by that we do not always mean God's interests and God's causes. We treat them as commercial interests. We talk about "running" them. We tend to consider unduly the people upon whose financial support they depend. We glory in the intellectuality of their ministry, the fashion of their congregations, the charm of their music, their superiority over like churches in quite innocent, though quite worldly, ways. The world's ideals and Christ's ideals are intermingled in the churches. The people are largely alienated from the churches because the churches are not the centres of evangelical truth and love. *No church is ever really a centre of evangelical truth which is not the centre of evangelical love.*

I must not be understood to be arguing that the church does not want the people. I think on the whole the churches do want the people, but I do not think they want them enough. Christian people are honestly sorry and disturbed that so great numbers of their fellow countrymen

are outside the churches, but are they sufficiently disturbed at present to concern themselves less about denominational successes, the commercial prosperity, the theological calibre, the æsthetic beauty of their services? Some churches are doing an enormous amount to-day by the establishment of great mission halls which make an almost exclusive appeal to the masses of the people, and yet anyone who knows anything about the great missions, say of Wesleyan Methodism, knows at the same time with what difficulty they have been established, and what prejudices they have had to overcome. There is no great denomination to-day which does not make ten, and perhaps I might say a hundred attempts to appeal to the upper and middle classes for one which it makes to appeal definitely to the working classes, and notwithstanding this we marvel the working classes do not come to our churches. Yet a greatly preponderating part of our appeal is made to a select 4,000,000 out of the 40,000,000 of our population. The point is—are they to come on our terms or on theirs? Are they to come on Christ's terms?

I am asked to suggest methods of reaching the people. I am frankly sceptical of the permanent benefit of any method that can be invented. I do not believe that the alienation of the people from the church is due so much to the antiquity of the church's method as to the coldness of the church's

spirit. If the spirit is right the methods will follow, and where the spirit is wrong, "Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels and have not love it profiteth me nothing." The masses of the people of England will never be reached by mechanics. The people who cleave to antiquated methods for the sake of antiquated methods clearly show that they do not love the people as much as they love the traditions of men. It is the *spirit* that matters.

The great requirement of the church of Jesus Christ to-day is the religion of Jesus Christ. New methods are merely sewing new cloth on old garments. It is the spirit that matters. The church of Jesus Christ needs to realise it is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. It is in the world with the purpose of establishing the kingdom of God. Where the church gives itself to the guidance of the spirit it will always be original in its methods. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." Therefore the method which I suggest is prayer, which is of infinitely more importance to the church than any scheme of mechanics it may adopt. It is a matter of the spirit and ideals. We need to rid ourselves of many of the ideals of quite secondary importance—denominational, commercial, literary, æsthetic. If we are to win the people of England we must not forget that the masses of the people are not cultured and they have not the æsthetic

sense of the clergy of many of the churches. If the church is to win the people it must appeal therefore to the deep common heart of them. The pulpit can do much. It must remember that the Divine Commonplaces save, not cleverness, fine diction, style. Modern methods have of course been successful, but they are not successful except in so far as they are applications of evangelical zeal and love. The people of England will flock again to the churches, when we love Christ enough, and we love them enough.

A Cross-begotten enthusiasm for humanity will direct us into the right ways. Nothing else will be permanently effective; and while I believe that every method which can be pursued without treachery to Christ, should be pursued in reaching the people, I am sure none of these methods are in themselves "open sesames." What the world needs to-day is a living, loving church; glad because it possesses and proclaims the great message of the love of God, and proclaiming it not only with eloquent and faithful lips, but by self-crucifying lives. Let the churches make Christ visible, and the world will be illuminated. He that says: "I am the Light of the World" also says "Ye are the Light of the World."

VI

By SIR OLIVER LODGE [1]

The allegation is sometimes made that laymen are indifferent to religion. I do not believe it, unless by "laymen" is understood the great mass of the people. Even then I doubt if they are indifferent to real religion, or to reality and sincerity and lofty-mindedness of any kind. I do not think that they can be considered indifferent even to theology, of a sort,—not to problems connected with apparent opposition between knowledge and faith, for instance, nor to questions of biblical interpretation and the nature of inspiration, nor are they unopen to the influence of a saintly life, or disposed to treat lightly such fundamental subjects as the existence of Deity and the relations between man and God.

I gather that they are not indifferent in this country to these topics, because they seem always willing to read about them or to discuss them. And if this refers to the more educated classes, it may be maintained on behalf of the masses that their perennial excitement about what

[1] Reprinted from the *Hibbert Journal.*

doctrines shall be taught to small children, though it may lack lucidity, seems to argue anything but indifference.

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which people in this country[1] are indifferent to something allied to religion, at any rate to its outward and visible manifestations. To ecclesiasticism they are indifferent, and they do not in any great number go to church. Why is this? Why have the outward and visible forms of religion lost hold of both educated and uneducated people?

I believe that over-pressure is one answer,—a general sense of the shortness of life and the immense amount there is to be done in it. This holds true whether the press of occupation is caused by the demands of pleasure, or of business, or of investigation, or of work for the public weal. In each case life is all too short for what can now be crowded into it. As soon as our faculties are well-developed, and our influence fairly active, it is difficult not to begin to think of being called to service elsewhere—there is no time to expend in unprofitable directions.

Is going to church unprofitable, then? To some men often, yes; to others, I suppose, always no; save in the sense that they have not profited

[1] *i.e.* England,—no one, I presume, makes such an assertion about Scotland; while as for Ireland—people there seem to lie more open to the charge of pugnacity than of indifference.

by it. Perhaps to none is it quite unprofitable, but they may think it so. If it acted as a stimulus and an inspiration and a help to life, then surely people in general would not be so foolish as to be indifferent to it. But they may be mistaken; this is the age of strenuousness and high pressure, and it may be that a quiet two hours of peaceful meditation would be the very best sedative and rest-cure for many men whose activities are wearing them out. Some, and those the most strenuous of all, have found it so. Mr Gladstone, for instance, was a studious attendant at public worship, and I should not be surprised to hear that the German Emperor and Mr Roosevelt are so likewise; possibly in their case, partly as an example, but also quite possibly as a private solace.

One cannot but admire men, to whom every five minutes is of value, who thus give up large tracts of time to religious exercises; and it is possible that many active men who ignore this help would be the better in every way if they too submitted themselves to the same discipline. It may be one of those cases where more haste is the less speed, and where the public assembling of ourselves together in a reverent and worshipful spirit would be a real contribution to vitality and power. Under certain conditions I feel sure that it would be so; but is it so under present conditions? The answer must depend partly on individual

temperament, partly on the form of "service" available.

We must all be acquainted with the soothed and sympathetic feeling which is sometimes the result of attendance at a place of worship in company with others, even if nothing particular has been said worth carrying away: this is felt especially if the occasion is a symbolic one—a national thanksgiving, for instance, a demonstration of religious feeling by members of a scientific body, or other occasion of that kind; but if it is a mere everyday or weekly service, there must be some special humour, or congruity, between the assembly and the words that have been said or the ceremonies that have been performed, in order that the effect may be produced.

There appear to be some ecclesiastically-minded persons who can derive sustenance from what to others may seem extraordinarily commonplace, or even childish, proceedings. I have seen Mr Gladstone (the name of so great a man may be employed as illustration without impertinence) in an attitude of rapt and earnest attention—not to the words of the Bible, which anyone might be glad to read, nor to the words of the Prayer Book, which to those with a strongly-developed historic sense may carry with them a world of half-felt emotion—but to the utterance from the pulpit of a very ordinary discourse. To most of

us, however, this patient self-contribution to what is going on is denied; and the feeling with which some go away from an average place of worship is too often a feeling of irritation and regret for wasted time.

I have known men of energy supply the needed intellectual exercise, and contrive to stimulate their historic sense, by using a Latin Prayer Book and a Greek Testament; and something of the sort is sorely needed if one is to attempt to keep one's attention fixed on the ancient formularies, so familiar from childhood, and recited or chanted in so meaningless a manner.

The greater number of men, I believe, cultivate the habit of inattention during the great part of the proceedings; and it is possible, though less easy, to preserve an attitude of mental inattention even when reciting formularies with the lips. Strenuously to attend to the meaning of the clauses, in a creed, for instance, or even in the Lord's Prayer, is an effort. I do not believe it is often made. The words are slipped through, and if an idea is caught every now and again, that is all that can be expected. There was a time when this inattentive recital of the well-known and familiar could be tolerated, and before the days of education it was probably useful. To some it may be useful still—to others it is tedious. The fact is, the conventional English Church service,

or eclectic admixture of combined services, is too long, and, as I think, too mechanical. The Psalter as a whole is oppressively tedious—I speak for myself; many of the chants one is weary of. Some of the prayers are beautiful, or would be if they were properly read and were not spoiled by such frequent iteration. The little song at the end of each commandment is gorgeous when one hears it in the *Elijah*, but it gets tiresome at the ninth repetition. The "Confession" is historically interesting and sometimes perhaps appropriate, but as a rule it is excessive and unreal; and if ever true, it is not a thing one wishes to sing in public, nor indeed to *sing* at all, still less to pay a few illiterate boys and men to sing or monotone for one.

The *Te Deum*, on a national occasion, and sung slowly and emphatically, may be magnificent: as ordinarily treated it is almost useless, and seems only inserted as a convenient break between the Lessons; save occasionally when the setting and singing are specially good, in which case it can be enjoyed as an oratorio is enjoyed.

Some people may be able to utilise parts of the services which to others are tedious, and it may be contended that there is something for everybody; but for most people there must be long spells of dulness.

Length, however, is not the only objection:

rapidity, which is perhaps a consequence of length, is another. Constantly and rapidly repeated formularies must surely tend to become mechanical. We jeer at a Thibetan water-worked praying-wheel as a mechanical form of prayer; and yet I can imagine a peasant joyfully going on with his labour in the fields, in the consciousness that his prayer was being periodically turned up to heaven by the forces of nature; and his soul might send an aspiration after it, without interfering with the industry of his body. I doubt if such a ritual is really more mechanical than some English services which I have attended. I know well that any liturgy—the bleakest as well as the most ornate—can elevate the soul of the truly pious; but this minority cannot be included among the laity of whom indifference to religion is even alleged.

As to the recital of a few incredible articles in a creed, I say nothing: they are not numerous, and hardly act as a strong deterrent except to a few earnest souls; if there were reality about the procedure, some of the clauses would be repellent, but as it is, the Athanasian hymn can be chanted through with the rest: it is an interesting glimpse into an ingenious mediæval mind to whom all the mystery of Divinity was expressible in words, with great positiveness of assurance and with arithmetical precision of specification. But so far

as this creed and the Articles contain things to which we and our teachers, the beneficed clergy, are expected to adhere, they must be to some extent deterrent; and it must be admitted that they are rather out of date.

With all the enthusiasm for religion in the world, I would say to professional Churchmen, you really cannot continue to expect people to wade continually through so much mediæval and ecclesiastical lore. You must free the ship of official religion from incrustation: it is water-logged and overburdened now, and its sails are patched and outworn. I do not ask you to use steam or any new-fangled mode of propulsion. By all means keep your attachment to the past; but study reality and sincerity; strive to say what you really mean, and to say it in such way that others may know that you mean it, and may feel that they mean it too.

I trust that it is not an inseparable concomitant of a State religion that petitions should be tied and bound in rigid forms, that no audible prayer can be uttered except what is printed and authorised; it is pitiful when the only initiation permitted, even at times of stress, lies in the emphasis which may be thrown upon certain words, and the pauses that may be made after them. But at least the sermon is free. So let preachers realise their opportunities and make use of them, and let

them no longer throw away their chance of moving the hearts of men towards a higher and more useful and unselfish life, by over-attention to the conventional arrangement called the Church's Year. The annual commemoration of everything is often made an excuse for laziness; it saves the trouble of choosing a subject. It provides a hackneyed theme ready to hand, to be treated in a conventional and hackneyed manner. Silently and patiently the people sit there, and are not fed.

Religion is one thing; church services as often conducted are quite another thing. Modification will be resented and opposed by some singularly-minded lay Churchmen; nevertheless, if more eminent ability is to be attracted to the service of the Church, if the great body of the laity are to be reached in any serious and effective manner, modifications, excisions, and reforms are necessary. It is not religion to which people are indifferent.

VII

By REV. FRANK BALLARD, D.D.

UNREST is the religious commonplace of to-day. Pulpits, platforms, newspapers, magazines, books and booklets, acknowledge with varying degrees of concern that the times are religiously out of joint. Transition is announced as the characteristic note of the age in all matters relating to Christian beliefs, and the churches are represented as being cast into a crucible far more trying than any heretofore known. For this general attitude there must be, and there is, some real warrant. Every realm of human life quivers with unprecedented unsettlement. Internationally, nationally, politically, socially, no less than religiously, there are unmistakable signs of commotion the end of which is as uncertain as the beginning is undeniable. The very traffic on the railways is as significant as it is ever growing. Even the villager is no longer "rooted to the soil," but utilises "fast" trains with the utmost *sang froid,* whilst women and children simply swarm on all lines as comfortably as ducks in a pond. All this is as significant as common. It is a reminder of what is happening, with yet farther

reaching consequences, in the world of mind. And if what Mr Hall Caine so strongly affirms be at all true—that the main factor in a nation's well-being is its religion, then there is room indeed for serious thought, as far from panic as from *laissez faire*, in regard to the meaning and the issue of the swelling tide of change which is flowing in with such resistless force.

If, through limitations of space, we give here our main attention to Great Britain, two things may be affirmed with confidence. It is a poor exhibition of what a Christian country should be; but it is, so far as religion is concerned, more attached to the Christian faith than to any other. Probably also it is the most Christian country in the world, and whatever its failures from the Christian ideal, or those faults of the churches which everyone feels now competent to denounce, Professor Seeley is undoubtedly right in the Preface to *Ecce Homo*, when he urges that it is idle for our modern self-satisfied criticism to claim to be independent. "Christian influences are in the air; our very conception of virtue is Christian; the tone, the habits of sentiment and language—in short all the associations of virtue—have been furnished by the discipline of the Christian Church."[1]

Moreover, even Mr Blatchford, in the very midst of his throes of alarm respecting Germany's alleged

[1] Cheap ed., p. vii.

evil designs, exclaims "If only we were all Christians —but we are not." In his special effort towards the destruction of Christianity, he begins with the emphatic avowal that all our national affairs are being "run on anti-Christian lines," and then closes by lurid lamentation over the present condition of things. Whence the question is forced on every honest reader—if this welter of woe results from working on anti-Christian lines, is it not time that genuinely Christian principles were tried instead?

Two things here again are clear. (1) The churches have been and yet are—whatever their differences—the exponents and custodians of Christianity. (2) Their position and influence in regard to the vast whole of the community, is definitely waning. Not only is the ancient feeling of awe for the church as a sacred institution, and the clergy as semi-celestial personages, defunct, but churches in general are viewed, even in our British midst, as merely embodiments of a cult distinctly optional. They are all alike, from Anglicanism to Plymouth Brethrenism, "sects," permissible and more or less respectable, but no one of them obligatory, as of yore, on pain of perdition.

It does not, of course, follow that the Churches are uninfluential or are actually failing. Besides the mighty powers of sacred custom and social convention, they hold, as Mr Blatchford acknowledges,

"the unswerving trust of millions of honest and worthy citizens." If it were true that the five-sixths of the adult population which are unmistakably outside all the Churches, definitely and dogmatically opposed Christian principles, one must then be permitted to say that it would be an unmeasured calamity. But, it is not true. What is true is serious enough, viz., that the churches, as Christian-making institutions, are not nearly keeping pace with the growth of population; and that amongst the hosts of the indifferent there is a steadily growing recoil, not only from Christian methods but from fundamental Christian doctrines. Mr M'Cabe is, however, in far too great a hurry when he so vehemently demands "the sweeping away of the whole tottering structure of conventional religion and worship."[1] The wish, of course, is father to the thought. But wishes are poor weapons against facts.

Whatever the relative failure, actually, the Christian churches of this land are in a better position than ever before. The numbers even of members, let alone sympathetic adherents, are greater and growing; the general tone is loftier; there is far less bigotry, and much broader sympathy tending to unity; higher intelligence is leading to wiser methods; the mind of the Master is much more truly represented in their

[1] *Haeckel's Critics Answered*, p. 126.

whole attitude. Sunday Schools are being improved on all hands; whilst as regards that practical philanthropy which, after all, responds most directly to the immediate needs of myriads, the Churches are now doing, in any one week, more than unbelief has done in all its history. Hence, whatever else is called for, pessimism and despair are assuredly out of place.

It seems necessary to say this plainly, as an introduction to an equally plain statement of the reasons of comparative failure, and an unflinching indication of improvements which are thereby necessitated. In pleading for these latter, we are certainly not leading a forlorn hope. But it is difficult to say who are the greatest hinderers of true Christian progress, the despairing pessimists or the unconditional optimists. Both are assuredly wrong. The only attitude that is warranted by the facts is conditional optimism. And the conditions are: (1) That all the related facts be honestly faced; and (2) that the best means for dealing with them be not only talked about but acted on.

We will proceed to state the case as fully as our limited space permits. For the general shrinking from public worship, the apparent disinclination for church membership, the more or less marked alienation from definite Christian principles, which cannot at present be denied, there is certainly no one exclusive cause. Rather is there a complex blend-

ing of many causes which work into each other's hands, and show all signs of increasing rather than decreasing in influence. They may be conveniently divided into theoretical and practical. To all these justice must be done, before there can be any hopeful consideration of remedial measures.

Theoretical or Negative.—These influences may be generally characterised as negative, and succinctly expressed as the inevitable results of the modern atmosphere. Perhaps one might as truly say that they incarnate the scientific spirit, inasmuch as they more or less definitely pit the visible, measureable, and natural, against the invisible, immeasurable, and supernatural. The result is a diffused weakening of conviction as to the truth and authority of Christianity, with the consequent relegation to option of what was formerly regarded as solemn duty, or even dire necessity. Nothing more, of course, can here be attempted than mere enumeration. The multiplied facts, which would prove each suggestion only too thoroughly, must be left to other occasions. The modern influences which tend to prevent firm and potent conviction in regard to Christian principles, are such as these.

(1) The general effect of increased education, bringing to pass larger liberty of thought as well as activity of mind, and involving of necessity the loosening of many former conceptions which were both rigid and narrow.

(2) The special spread of scientific knowledge, militating against notions strongly associated with Christianity, as surely as did the Copernican astronomy against the Ptolemaic scheme which perfectly contented the Church of earlier times. The mere mention of geology, or of Evolution, is sufficient pointer to what is here indicated.

(3) The knowledge of history has made scarcely less progress than science. But this again has sufficed to put an end for ever to not a few conceptions which through generations past have been deemed inseparable from the Christian faith. Up to quite recent days, for instance, the chronology of Archbishop Ussher, as printed in Biblical margins, was deemed an infallible guide to ancient history, apart from all other matters embraced in modern anthropology.

(4) How far such developments of science and history have affected the estimate of the Bible and its alleged inspiration, can no more be exactly gauged than sensibly denied. When a religious magazine[1] publicly asks, "Are we losing the Bible?" it is at least a straw indicating a current. In face of whole libraries of discussion on this vast and delicate theme, the plain truth stands out that the Bible of the present, let alone of the future, is not the Bible of the past. The old values are shaken, the new are not yet apprehended.

[1] *Quiver*, Nov. 1910.

The resulting perplexity is undeniable for all except a few extremists, who are sometimes pietists, sometimes Philistines.

(5) It were equally vain to-day to assume that the theology hitherto known as "orthodox," is unaffected. The particular movement known as "The New Theology," or the "Liberal Christian League," will certainly not "fizzle out," as some good people devoutly hope. It has not only come to stay, but come to grow. "Evangelical Theology" itself has become a wide term, covering many grades of breadth and of adaptation to modern knowledge. By all save such as are too much engrossed in mission work to have any time, or possibly disposition, to read and think, it is freely acknowledged that it is just as impossible to ignore the new movements of thought and insistings of criticism, as it is unnecessary to accept their findings without protest or modification.

(6) Outside the pale of the theological world, changes scarcely less influential religiously are plainly coming to pass. The former sense of sin, however ill defined, was immeasurably potent. Now, even Sir Oliver Lodge reports that "the higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins, let alone their punishment."[1] It is as easy as necessary to ask in reply where the "higher" comes in, if a man is to have no more moral anxiety

[1] *Man and the Universe*, p. 220.

than a dog ? But there is some truth in the hint. The gruesome and repulsive eschatology of much past " orthodoxy " has been so unequivocally dismissed by modern thought, as to bring along with it, perhaps inevitably, a general discrediting of sin's actuality and solemnity. This, again, has reacted in sanctioning, or at least permitting, the loss of the old sense of fear which begat reverence for sacred things in the minds of ordinary folk. The " fear of God " was undoubtedly largely based on hell, but the resistless modification, and in some sense dismissal of the latter, has set men free from almost all dread of consequences as to the neglect of their " religious duties." This has naturally given unmeasured impulse to independent thinking, and has emancipated men from the domination of parson and squire alike—so far as the strong arm of the law at present permits.

(7) Speaking generally, the age is democratic, with the promise of becoming much more so. Hence the revolt against the " divine rights " of an aristocracy, carries with it deeply cherished resentment against the ecclesiasticism which has always been associated with the cult of class and caste. The popular mind is not equal to making fine distinctions, and so lumps together clergy and gentry, as the natural enemies of working men. More especially during recent years has the undoubted development of Socialism been largely

brought about by propagandists who vehemently denounced Christianity and social tyranny in the same breath, with the unhesitating corollary that they were one and the same thing. The result of such declamation, however false the assertions, has been far greater than the Churches imagine.

(8) It cannot be denied that there has been some ground for a popular attitude of aversion. An observant writer, in full sympathy with Christianity,[1] reminds us that working men bitterly resent the fact that "parsons, church-goers, and church organisations have opposed Factory Acts, Free Education, Poor Law Reform, Old Age Pensions, Housing Reform, Electoral Reform, Temperance Reform, and Labour Legislation on behalf of the oppressed"; and that "whatever social emancipation Labour has won, has been not only without the churches, but often enough in spite of them." Certainly the record of the Bishops, in the House of Lords, is in these respects a miserable page of Christian history, as Macaulay vividly set forth.

(9) To all this must be added the direct and increasing efforts of virulent unbelief to discredit every thing Christian. The effect of the propaganda of Mr Bradlaugh, as the most impressive representative of the old Secularism, was much greater than the churches acknowledged, and the more recent

[1] *Christianity and the Working Classes*, by George Haw and others.

efforts of his successors, though less violent, have been and are no less influential. The Rationalist Press Association has flooded the country with cheap reprints perpetuating the works of Christianity's cleverest opponents, whilst the *Clarion* and other periodicals have done everything that modern journalism can do, to enhance the anti-Christian effect. How really, also, such popular influences are supported by not a few writers and teachers in higher educational quarters, is well known to students, though generally ignored by churches and preachers.

(10) Hence the increase of actual disbelief, in regard to the whole Christian faith, is much more considerable than popular preachers and writers are disposed to acknowledge. It is indeed a sure way to religious applause if the pulpit or platform orator affects to despise this increase. But such superficiality does not touch the facts of the case.

(11) As things are, one, at least, of the reasons why so many men are becoming not merely indifferent to but alienated from Christian beliefs, is because the churches so persistently content themselves with assuming that their doctrines are beyond question. Under this pretence not only are modern objections to faith ignored, but preachers are positively exhorted never to mention them in the pulpit, for fear of disturbing the minds of the faithful. Meanwhile, doubts and difficulties which are

easily apprehended fill the atmosphere of the week, and true answers to them, which often require care and patience, are, as a rule, wholly unattempted by the professed teachers of Christianity.

(12) Vast numbers of those whom the churches ought especially to reach and guide, are at present unsettled, to say the least, not only by such fragments of science and history as they can apprehend, but by the spread of the pseudo-philosophy which falsely calls itself "Determinism." *Clarion* publications have done much more than comfortable Christians imagine during the last few years in this direction. But other appeals to the people, sometimes under high patronage, have contributed to such a diminution, and in some cases absolute denial, of moral responsibility as must, in the first place, put men beyond all Christian teaching, whatever may or may not be the subsequent social results.

Practical or Positive.—But besides the above, there are yet many other and positive hindrances to definite association with the churches in these days. It would be sheer fatuity to ignore them, although here we can but touch them with the lightest hand. We will note first those which are associated with Christianity itself.

(1) To an extent which can no more be measured than denied, there is an unquestionable enfeebling of personal conviction, not merely amongst people in general, but in great numbers of professing Chris-

tians. To these, as General Booth puts it only too truly, Christianity is but "a kind of Worcester sauce to impart a religious flavour to life"; or in the more scholarly but none the less practical representation of the Bampton Lecturer for 1907,[1] they are inoculated with just enough religion to keep them immune from any developments of genuine Christian devotion. Myriads who are connected with churches have neither faith enough to doubt, nor conviction enough to act.

(2) As a consequence they contribute largely to that greatest of all hindrances to the Christian conquest of civilisation, the lack of character corresponding to profession. When Mr Herbert Spencer's indictment, that "Christians profess one day in the week a doctrine of human duty which they renounce in practice on the other six days," is deliberately confirmed by such Christian advocates as the cultured Bampton Lecturer just mentioned,[2] it is vain to dismiss this serious charge as but the spleen of unbelief. Christ Himself plainly and for ever staked the reality of discipleship on the existence of an *extra*[3] in personal character. The Apostles everywhere echoed and illustrated His

[1] *The Reproach of the Gospel*, by Rev. J. H. F. Peile, p. 156. This volume merits the closest attention of every modern Christian.

[2] *The Reproach of the Gospel*, pp. 6, 7, 21.

[3] See Matt. v. 7, "What *extra* do ye?" and correlate this with v. 20.

doctrine. Average Christians fail to respond to this test. Non-church-goers ask in vain for any distinctive *superiority* of character on the part of church-goers. Satisfactory exceptions only emphasise the unsatisfactory rule. This applies, unfortunately, not seldom to those who should be, *par excellence*, the very incarnation of Christ's "extra," viz., the Christian clergy of all churches. Putting aside the stupid conventional distinction between "clergyman" and "minister," those who are set apart on purpose to teach and to exhibit Christian principles, ought undoubtedly to be the manifest embodiment of what Professor Seeley truly termed "this higher-toned goodness which we call holiness." [1] For some this may be fairly claimed, but with only too many others—beyond the adoption of a "clerical garb," which during recent years has become specifically priestly and correspondingly unattractive to the democracy, as well as entirely foreign to New Testament principles and practice—false charity must not gag the plain avowal that there is, on the average, nothing special to mark out the man as a living proof of the *super*natural religion he professionally represents.

(3) Passing in thought from individuals to churches, are these related to each other as branches of a living brotherhood, one in heart by reason of

[1] *Ecce Homo*, cheap edition, p. 59.

the loving Fatherhood of God assured to them all alike in Jesus Christ? A Christian writer replies: "The Roman Catholics consider themselves superior to the Anglicans, the Anglicans scoff at the Nonconformists, the Presbyterians look down on Congregationalists, the Wesleyans think they are more respectable than the Primitive Methodists, and they all adopt patronising airs towards the Salvationists."[1] Can anyone deny that in face of actual facts this is but a mild statement?

(4) If we turn from character to doctrine, it must surely be acknowledged that, altogether apart from the extreme positions of certain "New Theologians," some modifications of bygone teaching are as thoroughly warranted as they are absolutely necessary, if the mind and heart of the twentieth century are to be touched at all. Yet no one can question the number or the influence of the genuine obscurantists who refuse to budge an inch from what their forbears deemed "sound"? Here, for instance, is one most popular preacher recently in London, who deliberately prints[2] that "There is no more damnable doctrine than the universal Fatherhood of God." Here, again, is another who publishes in strong language the dogma that the first eleven chapters of Genesis must be taken as literal and

[1] *Christianity and the Working Classes*, by George Haw and others, p. 37.

[2] Reported in the *Christian World*.

scientific history, or all Christianity is a delusion. Many other instances of the same character might only too easily be specified. Need one ask what is the effect of such attitudes on the minds of the rising generation who are increasingly instructed in all latest knowledge ?

(5) Possibly the most serious factor of all as to modern church-going is the general standard of utterance from the pulpit. What is, in all truth and fairness, to be said of it ? Here we are bound to speak of the average. It is as unnecessary as impossible to do justice to worthy exceptions. But is the average Anglican pulpit to be taken seriously at all ? When a bishop openly avows, after careful observation, " I wonder how the laymen stand it "—one may be permitted to reply that the laymen do not stand it. They are conspicuous by their absence. The childish twaddle which does duty for numberless sermons is appreciated—mostly for its brevity —by women and children. That a higher level is reached by Free Church preachers, probably no one would deny. But here again, if the modern situation demands that truth be told, the truth is that the average pulpit deliverance is neither calculated to convince the mind nor captivate the heart of the modern man in the street, whose increasing disregard for churches we are considering. Regular church-goers must doubtless be comforted

and confirmed by interesting sermons and expository preaching, but the four-fifths in the outer court will assuredly demand something more virile and actual than what is generally to be heard, if they are to be brought in. Nor is it true to reply that their innate depravity always vitiates their spiritual taste.

(6) Even if the pulpit were all it should be, are the accompanying conventions of worship such as to win the men of this generation? Of a truth it were difficult to say which is more calculated to keep men away from worship, the long-drawn and antiquated Liturgy, which some regard as too sacred even for careful revision, or the irreverently fluent verbosities which pass for prayer in Free Churches. To say nothing of the formal, mindless, heartless, and not seldom nasally-twanged gabble which is termed "reading the Lesson"—the "Lesson" itself being taken mostly from a translation three hundred years old, in which errors and archaisms often make modern apprehension of meaning impossible. Fine anthems may be sung by trained choirs, but such alone will never constitute the worship which is to bring the men of to-day into heart-and-mind allegiance with Christian Churches.

(7) Much more might be said with truth concerning the unpractical pietism which is too often protected by the term "spirituality," and objects to "institutional churches" on the ground that they

are too " secular." Also as to the rigid and narrow grooves in which practical church work is often carried out. It is, moreover, useless to deny that in numberless instances the inner life of a church involves a system of social caste as real as anything on the foreign field.

But there are no less potent hindrances working at the same time outside the Churches. Even to enumerate them is an unwelcome task. To exhibit them in detail would require a volume ; yet every item would be true to fact. If we ask, leaving the " aristocracy " for the moment out of account, why the *demos* is not of itself drawn to Christian fellowship in the churches, these are some of the answers :—

(1) The pressure of modern life, in *myriads* of cases, so uses up human energy that there is only left a tired animal, utterly indisposed, if not unable, to think of higher things than the daily round of the fight for food.

(2) As regards the general position of affairs, there can be no doubt to an honest observer concerning these two things. (*a*) Labour has to no small extent been unfairly treated. It has never had its due share of the rewards of industrial toil. (*b*) In our time Labour's struggle for its rights has not only begun in earnest, but is becoming so engrossing as to crowd out all else. The ambiguities of Socialism cover, no doubt, many blind and unwise strainings after a

national Utopia, but there are, again, two vivid convictions throbbing all through the democratic unrest, viz. (*a*) that the good things of this life are distributed with cruel unfairness; and that (*b*) Christian churches are closely associated with the ruthless competitive system of modern trade, and with "vested interests" which block the way to anything like thorough reform. These are in themselves quite sufficient to justify the deliberate judgment of one so well informed as Mr A. Henderson, M.P., that "the estrangement of work-people from organised Christianity" not only exists but is growing.[1] The degree to which wealth, no matter how obtained, rules human society in a thousand ways, and the extent to which organised Christianity is dependent upon, even if not subservient to, men of means, cannot be concealed from the eyes of the "masses." Nor can it fail to make the churches seem to them the allies of the "classes" who exploit them. Even if it be insisted that the Free Churches of this land are on the side of the people, it must be remembered that these are not the "established" Church of this country, nor do they constitute more than half the avowed exponents of Christianity.

(3) There is yet another phase of the modern indisposition to become Christian. More money and more leisure come undoubtedly into the pos-

[1] *Christianity and the Working Classes*, p. 115.

session of the working artisan population of to-day than ever before. To no small proportion of the middle classes the same applies. For both alike there ensues herefrom a double tendency: first, to find complete satisfaction in the daily actualities of business, politics, and social amenities; and secondly, to fill up all life's margins with the facilities now as never before afforded for pleasures of all kinds, without any thought of those higher but harder ideals for which Christianity stands. To a certain extent the trend towards sensational enjoyment on the part of the "masses," must be regarded as a natural and necessary reaction from the monotonies of toil induced by our system of uttermost division of labour. But beyond that there may unquestionably be marked a craving for sensation, like the thirst of one who drinks salt water; whilst the influence of the Continent, developed by anti-Christian zeal in our midst, promises a sure if gradual loss of the old English Sunday, with all the concomitant influences which increasingly indispose modern men to attend church services on that day.

Remedies.—The foregoing list of suggested hindrances of church-going may seem long, but it does not approach to completeness. Every item of it admits of definite enlargement and forceful demonstration. Leaving the fuller statement to

other occasions, here is at least enough not only to prompt but to press home the query as to what hope, if any, can be suggested for the future from the Christian standpoint. Doubtless what is really needed might be compressed into a single truth viz. the opposite of each and all of these items of antagonism. Such counsel, however, would probably be as ineffective as true and trite. In point of fact, it is useless to *say* anything. What is wanted is that many things should be *done*. We hear much of the "need of revival" and of a "call to prayer." But in view of the whole case, some one has to risk being accused of impiety for saying that it is *not* another and larger "Welsh revival" which is called for, and that there may just as really be too much as too little prayer. It is but pious mockery to prolong prayer for what Christian men and women can be and do of themselves, if they choose. It is scarcely less than blasphemy to call upon Divine omnipotence to accomplish that which could only mean Divine self-contradiction, in attempting the coercion of morally free beings.

The revival which alone will avail to promote the Kingdom of Christ in the twentieth century may have emotion for its initiative, but it will be worse than useless unless it definitely develops on the three lines of conviction, character, and effort. Without these, the kindling of never so much pious fervour will accomplish no more towards the regeneration of

civilisation than the boiling of water in an open vessel will towards moving a locomotive. When it is said, for instance, in high quarters, that what is wanted is not more light but more heat; and that it is "not so necessary to make Christianity reasonable before men's eyes, as to make it real," one cannot but wonder whence Christian advocates obtain such suggestions of divorce. Surely what God hath joined together no Christian man should put asunder. Certainly the New Testament ideal of Christian propagandism consists in that co-working of mind and heart, intellect and emotion, which would give to the men of this century what alone they will welcome, heat with light, and the real in the reasonable.

If one word can be made to sum up the whole demand of the hour on the Christian behalf, it is, no doubt, the word "reality." The revival of reality throughout Christendom—however commonplace a prescription—is the true and only panacea for the fears and failures of the churches. That preachers should behave as they preach, and congregations act upon what they pray and sing; that pulpit teaching should be up to date, and that something more than sermons should be undertaken as a means of conveying Christian truth. Even as Mr T. E. Harvey, L.C.C., says: [1] "People who will not come to hear a sermon or address where they have no

[1] *Christianity and the Working Classes*, p. 215.

opportunity to hear other points of view stated, or to reply themselves, have shown themselves willing, and even eager, to come to addresses followed by a time of perfectly free discussion." To most church-workers such a suggestion seems dangerous, if not dreadful. But why? Christ Himself so taught; the Apostles did so; the foreign missionary has to do so. Why should the home preacher be always impregnably encircled within a "coward's castle," as if either he or his message would not bear the open air? This at least must be said unflinchingly, that the mental demands upon the professional exponent of Christian truths will grow with the advancing century, and will have to be met as never before, if the men in the street, no less than the men in the university, are to be captured for Christian principles. Nor is there anything unreasonable in such a demand, seeing that the way is practically cleared for preachers to give themselves earnestly to such service.

Moreover, if public worship is to be made in the best sense attractive for the men and women of our time, other elements besides the preaching will have to be seriously reformed. Forty years of constant observation, sympathetic as well as thorough, compel one to plead for more reality in the general conduct of religious services. Not only must there be no childish sermons, but also no stupidly sanctimonious hymns; no lessons read with

mechanical meaninglessness; no wearying substitution of quantity for quality in prayer—quality consisting in the hushed recognition of the nearness of a God as awful as tender; no ring of listless if not talkative professionals in the choir seats; no conflict for the best back sittings; no chilly welcome for strangers. These are not fictions. If they were, many half empty churches would be quite full. It is not God who is so far away that we must strain mind and heart to reach Him. It is man, man in the church, who needs to be aroused. The light and love of God are always waiting, as surely as the forces of nature wait to serve us the moment we obey them. It is the light and the love of Christian men and women for which the four-fifths of outsiders are really waiting. The fact that they are actually sinners, does not absolve those who ought to be saints from their burden of responsibility to show in deed as well as word what Christianity really means, alike for the pressing present and the unmeasured future. How much each individual should contribute to such a revival as is undoubtedly needed, cannot here be specified. "Let each man prove his own work." But the summary of the whole case remains, whether heeded or unheeded, in the glowing words of Paul—"Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all you do be done in love."

VIII

By RIGHT HON. SIR JOSEPH COMPTON-RICKETT, D.L., M.P.

THE world is deserting the Church ; that is the fact. More and more are those who attend becoming a caste apart, regarded by non-church-goers as specialists in matters of ritual and of doctrine, though indifferent to the essence of their own faith. They are looked upon as the Pharisees of old, sensitive to the cleansing of the cup and of the platter, less careful as to the quality of the wine and of the bread. It may be admitted at once that this is a danger ever present to the cult of religion. The lamp becomes the all-important matter, whilst the oil in the vessel with the lamp is apt to be overlooked. In attending to the machinery we may forget to replenish that driving force upon which the whole system depends. Yet it is equally true that enthusiasm will prompt the enthusiast to a close regard of those channels and accessories through which the faith has materially to express itself. If there is anything radically wrong with the churches, we are bound to look to the faith itself upon which all else must hang.

It is to be greatly feared that the facts are even worse than statistics imply. When a census has been taken of church attendance in any particular district it has almost invariably proved a decline in relation to population. Sometimes, in spite of an increase in population, a positive decrease in church attendance is recorded. Here and there, owing to peculiar circumstances or outstanding preaching, exceptions occur; but the general result makes for pessimism. From these returns, deduct the older people—that class which by inheritance and custom maintains its church association—and the younger generation, considered apart, would give still worse results. Hitherto, about two-fifths of the population have been associated with some place of worship. One-fifth of these may be approximately credited to the historic churches, Roman and Anglican. The Free Churches of the country claim the other fifth. At the best, therefore, the greater proportion is found without the churches, and it is to be doubted whether even that proportion will continue unchallenged.

Eighty per cent. of the children who pass through the Sunday Schools cannot be traced, in later years, in association with any Christian Church. Organised religion tends to become more mechanical and to lose its inspiration. When the Sunday comes round the souls of the worshippers do not lighten into fresh flame; the offices of the worship are cele-

brated with perfunctory rites. Fatigue, languor, indifference, mark the attitude of many who have not yet renounced the tradition of their religious past. Here and there, a revival of a more robust piety may rally the failing powers of personal religion. An early service stimulates by its suggestion of asceticism. A fine musical performance, a great preacher, may attract; the recitation of prayer, or the mystical suggestion of a sacrament may comfort the worshippers with the sense of some duty well done; but the message itself has ceased to sway the intellect or to vivify the emotions.

The Free Churchman, distracted and confused by the transitional state of theological teaching, turns from the pulpit to institutional work. The numerous societies which are affiliated to the churches alone in many cases serve to hold those churches together. Sunday schools are still recognised by unbelievers as fit places for their children, though fairy lore with moral teaching would answer the purpose as well. Once a year, the parents throng the church in order to hear their children sing. The School Anniversaries fill the deserted buildings with a crowd of friends interested in the children and in little else. It is true that, in industrial districts, remote from the larger towns, the church, whether established or free, is the one social centre. Without it there would be a sense of isolation, a weakening of social ties. If this ele-

ment in the church life of the country were to disappear it is doubtful whether the church of the family would survive.

Abandoning her theological teaching, the Church has forgotten that she is a living organism and is transforming herself into a philanthropic society. The worship finds expression through music, but an unreality attaches to the words. The same unreality has invaded the pulpit, although both in worship and in teaching there remains a sense of idealism, a reaching after the Unseen. The hard conditions of industrial life create a thirst for something higher, better, sweeter. The starved imagination must fulfil its hopes through a glimpse of that country which is very far off. The apostle recognised this when he warned his converts against the false glamour which drink inspired and offered us a substitute, a quickening of the imagination through spiritual influences. Yet the two things were not so far apart that they could not be compared. "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess; but be filled with the spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." In this sense, the churches continue to satisfy a sentiment, if they do not supply intelligent discrimination and a moral force in government. It is still better to go to the chapel than to wear out the Sunday in the club. The women who believe in the chapel carry

with them a proportion of their well-affected men folk.

We are forced to admit that traditional Christianity has been gradually losing its hold upon a portion of the population which formerly believed, and it does not retain the respect of those outsiders who once recognised church-going as a higher type of life, though they did not follow it themselves. A serious life implied sacrifice, and the church member became, in the eyes of the non-church-goer, a saving salt to the nation. Now, the emphasis upon brotherhood, the ethical teaching which has displaced the theological, the translation of dogma into poetry and into parable, have taken the taste out of the sermon and robbed the message of its once absorbing interest. The preacher has now become the moralist who counsels, and not the prophet who once denounced, reasoned, and persuaded.

Yet, concurrently with this defection, there is an extraordinary moral improvement in the State itself. War is denounced as an evil; the folly of competitive armaments comes home to every section of the nation, and there is a distinct effort to settle national differences through courts of arbitration. Civic morality is strengthening; the violence of labour troubles has been softened; more success has attended the attempts at compromise between Capital and Labour in the course of recurring disputes. The nation is growing temperate; its

manners are improving; the amenities of life are more desired. That care of youth and pity for old age, which have become so marked a feature in the politics of the day, cannot be directly attributed to the teaching of the churches. Human society has been aroused to organise itself more completely, to make this earth a better place for every individual passing through it, whilst it declines to discuss the chances of a future state of existence. Paradise must find itself fulfilled, here and now, in municipal parks, if you please, but certainly in national supervision over the details of life and the provision of comfort if not of luxury. If only in this life we are to have hope then we moderns seem to say: "We will not of all men be most miserable; we will make the best of it."

So far man himself, apparently unaided by supernatural powers, is raising his position, improving his surroundings, and at the cost of some individual liberty is grasping at fresh opportunities for personal betterment. Life is lengthening into healthier periods. Man has been replenishing the earth and is now subduing it. Nature is surrendering her secrets to him one by one. A confidence begotten by the new science encourages him to speak of the godhead in humanity, and discourages him from seeking any power external to himself to lift him yet higher. The Unknown grows more uncertain and impalpable. He is not prepared to admit any

personalities of existence save those which he is able to touch and handle. He more than suspects that there are no laws beyond his present ken which are not identical with those with which he is already familiar and by means of which he has succeeded in developing so far.

This materialism can be traced into religion itself upon which it has set its own mark. The bread and the wine are the manifestation of God in the flesh, the medium through which man can come into communication with the divine. At the other end of the scale, and remote from ritualism, there is the evangelical teaching which relies upon sentiment for a saving faith and for the rest concentrates upon institutional church work. The billiard room, the poor man's lawyer, the concerts and canteens, excellent as subordinate and sympathetic adjuncts, are threatening to take the place of prophesying and to eclipse the visions of the Lord.

Is there not a marked contrast between that earlier evangelical teaching which still retained the tool marks of Puritanism and this, its modern and degenerate form? How has the change come about? For some fifty years we have had the Fatherhood of God so taught as to exclude the older and severer faith of the Puritan. God is a Father, it is true, but the love which He expresses for mankind through the Gospel story should not

obliterate the other characteristics of His divine nature. That fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom has faded out of modern teaching. A God, all-powerful, all-wise, all-loving, is bound by those very qualities to bring everything right at the last. If the errancy of human nature is only provocative of the divine grace, there is nothing to dread beyond paternal discipline, which may indeed delay final restitution, but it cannot indefinitely withhold it. The churches have no warning to declare, and they threaten no punishment worth the name. Sooner or later, after a series of moral gymnastics, the prodigal will arrive either in this world or in another within sight of home. Meanwhile, the penalties of civil justice and the pains of neglected natural law will serve the purpose of appropriate punishment and for restraint. Formerly, the Invisible beset us behind and before and laid His hand upon us. Now He besets us before and not behind. He wooes; He encourages. But there is no rod for our shoulders, no sense of awe in our religion. The church itself is an institution to take or to leave. The decencies of life must be maintained, but we do not profess to be saints—just human flesh and blood like the others.

When the Sunday returns, there are numerous attractions which did not formerly exist. For the rich there are the far-reaching frolic of the motor-

car, the golf links, the social dinner; for the working man a good long rest in the morning, a clear-up of the week, physically, mentally, a sort of intellectual stock-taking, food and drink, the club, or the Sunday excursion. One thing commands attention—salvage from the wreckage of church attendance—the success of the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon, the formation of Brotherhoods for the intelligent and well-meaning. Many church members attend once in every few Sundays so as not to lose a bowing acquaintance with religion. They satisfy their conscience by liberal contributions to institutions and by subscriptions to empty pews.

Meantime, theologians continue to wrangle about matters of less importance. The real difficulties strike deeper than many suppose. Any minister who has won the confidence of his people will tell us that it is not doctrinal difference but the basal conditions of life which really excite the anguish of a soul distraught. The existence of a personal God, the reality of Providence, future life, the mysteries of undeserved suffering, and the tragedy of death—these are the questions concerning which the hungry heart is crying out for reassurance. Both the ministry and the laity hesitate to face them. Meanwhile the church is degraded into the concert hall. Sunday is growing into a feast day and ceasing to be a festival. Yet I

am persuaded that there is a deep under-current in the heart of the nation, a subterranean stream awaiting discovery. Amusement or recreation will never of themselves prove sufficient to fill the heart. Every now and then there is a pause in the rush of life, a musical rest in the song, and the low murmur of the far-away ocean challenges us with its eternal questioning.

What is to be done ? The answer is to be found in a restored message and in a Church conscious of her duty and of her opportunity. This is not the place to discuss the character of a vitalised theology. Yet without a real message a minister may continue to be the moral teacher but can never attain to the spiritual seer. If the Christian Church is only the custodian of a great tradition, and is not the expression of a living Person, who is sympathetic with the world of to-day, she will drop to the position of a debating society or be left to invent a philosophy for a secular theory of morals. " Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another ? " Let her settle that question first of all. The promise and hope of that Person has filled her life during the past centuries. If she has now parted with Him, let her reverently fold His linen clothes, and roll the stone back upon His garden grave. Her hesitation, her unrealities, her self-questionings, cannot be indefinitely continued ; for they are working mischief. If she recovers her

faith in that Person and can interpret His work in the world so as to make it realisable as well as intelligible to others, she can also take a restored view of her privileges and destinies.

No longer a society, merely drawn together by a common interest in an ancient story, the Church will begin again to make history. A living organism developes according to the vital principle which animates it and the conditions which surround it. So the Church, instead of stammering her doubts, will issue her commands. Her creeds will be re-made in the spirit of the age, not discarding the past but expanding with the present. Those creeds will not be cold recitals, but will be filled with the voice of many waters, a proclamation of life and of hope. The Church will recover that power of the keys once entrusted to her by her Master and will then be able to turn the rusty locks of many a secular problem. As she ascends into her heritage, new peoples will press within her borders with ever increasing curiosity and hope.

IX

By REV. THOMAS MARTIN, D.D.

The gravest problem which confronts the Church is the growing estrangement of the respectable and intelligent members of the working class from her communion ; and to the causes of that estrangement the attention of this paper will be chiefly directed.

Intense preoccupation with questions of material betterment.

The occasions of this state of mind are evident enough. The industrial developments of the past century have brought about conditions which force into prominence questions as to the relation between Capital and Labour. The mind of the working man of to-day is passionately interested in, one might say obsessed by, social and economic problems. The extension of the franchise has awakened in the masses the consciousness of power to secure their material well being. To better the condition of himself and his class has become a passion, a religion, to the working man. And with the emergence of this eager interest in the *here* and the *now*, interest in the *yonder* and the

hereafter has correspondingly abated. The centre of gravity has been changed. The "other life" has become a negligible quantity, and no longer operates as a supreme motive.

Contemporaneously with this movement, partly as cause and partly as effect, the doctrine of a future life is being less emphasised by the churches. Preachers do not, as they did fifty years ago, press the doctrine of a future hell more or less material. They know that, even if they did, little terror would be awakened in the pew. The word *salvation* connotes quite a different order of ideas from what it used to do. The modern man is no longer anxious about salvation in the old sense. Salvation for him must at least include social well-being here. Consequently he has begun to suspect that the churches can help him very little in the salvation he wants. The heaven the churches promise is a vague and nebulous object compared with the heaven-on-earth promised by the social reformer. In fact, the working man of to-day is beginning to ask boldly, "What can Christianity give me? What can the churches do for me?" The question may be sometimes put from an unreasoned and unreasonable point of view, but it is time for the churches to be able to state clearly what it is that they can give to the modern man.

Remedy.—It is certain that many working men, who are estranged from the churches will never be

brought back so long as they believe that the churches hold aloof from the questions that interest them, and ignore the question of the influence of material environment on their spiritual well-being. Of course it would be suicidal for ministers to preach directly on economic and political problems. They would only mix up the churches with party controversies, and destroy their spiritual authority. But it is one thing for a preacher to avoid economic and political questions, in the pulpit, and it is a very different thing for him to go on turning over the old doctrines in the same old way, as if changes were not rapidly taking place in the minds of working men, and their conception of the old doctrines were not undergoing profound modification.

The preaching of the minister who is interested in, and has given patient study to, social problems, even if he does not refer to them directly from the pulpit, will be rich in possible applications of Christianity to current questions, and will have a note of real sympathy which working men will be quick to detect. We need the "old Gospel," but the old Gospel with a difference, and with a new outlook upon the present life. Our ministers should get a better training in social and economic questions, not that they may lecture on them (though they might with advantage do so on special occasions and from the pulpit), but that

they may rightly understand the *inwardness* of the modern mind. If they did so, then they would be able to take the truths that underlie the old doctrines of hell, judgment, and salvation, and preach them so as to evoke deep response from the souls of men in whom the spiritual life, though at present it is crushed down by the pressure of earthly interests, is yet latent, and ready to spring up when wisely touched.

Scepticism and agnosticism, more or less reflective, account for a considerable measure of estrangement from the churches.

I have had the opportunity of meeting, in a great city, large numbers of the more intelligent working class, and I have been frequently surprised at the interest they take in such questions as: Theism, the Origin of Man, Evolution, etc. Such questions are much discussed by them, and they subscribe largely to the publications of the Rationalist Press. Not a few of them are familiar with the works of Darwin, Huxley, and Haeckel. The result is more than a "mild agnosticism"; it is in many cases a distinct, aggressive scepticism and materialism. Being without the necessary philosophical and metaphysical training to enable them to refute the sceptical positions, these readers fall an easy prey.

There is a Socialism that is not antagonistic to the churches; but much of the prevalent

Socialism rests on a purely materialistic basis and is, of course, hostile to Christianity. Moreover, in the minds of the people as a whole, there is considerable confusion regarding the Bible. Certain results of the Higher Criticism have filtered down among the masses of the people, and, as yet, chiefly the destructive results. What the people know is, that the possibility of many of the miracles is being questioned, and that the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture, as well as the doctrine of plenary inspiration, are being abandoned. Not being in a position to appreciate the constructive view of inspiration that is being gradually evolved, the people's faith in the Bible as in any sense a record of Divine Revelation is being rudely shaken. Many of them suspect that ministers are preaching what they do not believe. This, I am sure, accounts for a larger percentage of alienation from the churches than is generally supposed.

Remedy.—There must be more candour on the part of religious teachers and more confidence in the people's capacity to receive the truth. Ministers must not remain in an ambiguous attitude. It is well to spare the feelings of older people who cannot be expected to assimilate new views, and who are sure to be hurt by them, but ministers have a still greater responsibility to the younger generation. There can be no progress for the many without pain to the few. Well-established results

of criticism which are not reconcilable with old conceptions of inspiration and revelation must be shown to be reconcilable with new conceptions, without destroying the authority of the Bible as the spiritual guide of man. Ministers should deal more frankly with the young people in their Bible classes, and educate them in views of the Bible which they will not be forced to abandon when their intelligence matures, and they have nothing left to lean upon. It may also be questioned whether the hesitation of the Church to revise its creed is not alienating great numbers from her communion. The churches greatly need to learn from the methods of the Rationalist Press and to circulate among the working classes cheap books of real apologetic value—frank, yet reverent in spirit, and dealing in a straightforward manner with the questions to which reference has been made. I can testify that many of our most intelligent working men are waiting for such a movement.

The churches in their methods, services, and congregational usages, do not satisfy the democratic aspirations of the working man of to-day.

The churches are apt to seem to him the special preserve of the privileged and the prosperous. He applies a certain rough and ready logic to the situation. He is aware that the churches nominally and theoretically teach a doctrine of the brother-

hood of man, but he thinks that in reality, and by their methods, they deny it. He feels that the same class distinctions and social exclusiveness which offend him in the life of the community around him are but thinly disguised in the churches—are, in fact, reproduced and emphasised in places of worship. The cleavage that has taken place between the West End and the East End of our great cities has resulted in churches for the rich on the one hand and in churches for the poor on the other. The former are in a position to secure the ablest ministers and enjoy luxurious conditions of worship. When the poor man enters his church he is not so much reminded of his equality with all men before God as of his equality with his own class. And even in the case of churches that are representative of all classes, graded pew-rents emphasise class distinctions. The rich pay for, and sit in, the "chief seats in the synagogues," while the poorer who pay less have the inferior places. The payment of even a small pew-rent, in the case of a working man with a large family, is often a serious matter: and though no doubt in most churches there are free seats for the poor, yet these seem to him to involve the stigma of pauperism, and rather than occupy them he will stay away. The working man of to-day is very sensitive, and opposed to the

survival of anything like *feudalism* in congregational life.

Remedies.—The churches should organise themselves on more democratic lines. Pew-rents should be abolished. There should be no allocation of pews, but any and every pew should be free to all. The rich and well-to-do members should be taught to lay aside their social conventionalities in the House of God. There should be a genuine mixing in congregational life ; so that it would be no mockery for the minister to say in the assembly : " One is our Father even God, and all we are brethren."

Further, there can be no doubt that the system of Mission Halls, specially intended for the poor, is vicious. They emphasise class distinctions in religion. Good churches should be built in the poorest districts, and rich people should be taught to find, even at personal inconvenience, pleasure in joining these churches, and in taking a hearty share in Sabbath School work and otherwise. No system whereby doles for religious purposes are sent from the West End to the East End will atone for the absence of real mixing with the poor, in the spirit of unaffected human brotherhood.

Unattractive Church Services.

Even if the methods just indicated were realised, we should still have to face the fact that the ordinary service in the churches is not attractive to the average man of to-day. It does not appeal to the

special mentality which modern conditions have developed in him. A frequent utterance of the younger man is: "The church is a dull place."

The atmosphere in which the working man does his thinking to-day is charged with eagerness and excitement, and indisposes him for that reflectiveness to which the quietness and restraint of the House of Prayer are congenial. The daily newspapers form the staple literature of the masses, and that kind of literature cannot at least be called dull. The working man attends numerous meetings—meetings on political, labour and economic questions. At these meetings he is accustomed to freedom in expressing approval or disapproval of the sentiments uttered by the speaker. The addresses he hears are generally seasoned up to a high pitch by strong and stirring statements. In contrast to that, the quietness, decorum and restraint of the churches are apt to hang heavily upon the modern man.

Remedies.—The problem is difficult. The note of reverence in the church service must be maintained; but how to do that, and at the same time modify and adjust the methods of worship to the impatient minds of modern men, constitutes a great difficulty. Many ministers are beginning to discover that the P.S.A. service has not increased their hold on the religious life of the people. Sensationalism in the pulpit secures only a brief

triumph. The House of God must not become a place of amusement, and the appeal must not be to the superficial emotions touched by the music-hall and the third-rate theatre.

Yet the hour of worship should not be dull. The prayers are too often couched in archaic and mediæval phraseology, and appeal to the average worshipper with the vagueness of a foreign language. They should as a rule be much briefer, and in simple language be expressive of sympathy with the average man's outlook on life, and his struggle with circumstances. Men accustomed to direct and vivid appeal from the speaker on the platform feel drowsy under a formal, read discourse Preachers should cultivate that best form of extempore speaking which comes from previous careful study and from fulness of mind. A taste and love for music is getting more and more widely diffused among the masses, and the churches should endeavour to provide the best music in the rendering of the praise. To sum up, services should be bright, living, and as humanly interesting as is consistent with reverence.

Lack of healthy and hearty human contact between the minister and people.

To many working men the minister is very much an unknown being; and consequently his preaching has a note of *distance* in it. It is being recognised now-a-days that preaching—

even able preaching—will not draw and keep a congregation together. There must be genuine pastoral work among the people. Few ministers who get into close human contact with men have to complain of empty pews. The minister must mix with his flock—"familiar, but by no means vulgar."

Visitation of the homes in the evening generally leads to rich results. In most cases the minister visits during the day when husbands and the grown members of the family are absent at their work; but if he visits in the evening his opportunity is greatly increased. He meets the men, who are at leisure, and ready to unbend. He gets interested in their occupations and outlook. He may even enter into judicious and friendly discussion with them on the topics which absorb their attention. The reality of his human sympathy is thus felt by them; and the consequence is that his preaching is enriched through familiar knowledge of their ordinary life, while his teaching from the pulpit is received by them with new interest, not merely as the words of a minister, but as the words of a man they know, and who knows them. In these days it is increasingly difficult to get young men and women to offer themselves for full membership through the Holy Communion; but if the minister visits them in the evening, speaks sincerely and earnestly to them about the necessity for

their considering such a step, and then on the eve of the formation of the class for communicants reminds them by letter or otherwise of the former conversation, they seldom fail to come forward.

Lack of care on the part of the churches towards migrating members and communicants.

Owing to the rapid fluctuations of population caused by industrial developments in various centres, there is a ceaseless migration of the adherents of churches. Too often they leave, say the country for the city, without any care being taken for their future welfare. In the city they find themselves in strange surroundings. The aspect of the churches is unfamiliar to them. Their arrival is not known. No friendly hand is held out to them; and consequently they very often lapse into sheer indifference. The churches suffer immense loss and leakage in this way. It would not be difficult to devise a system, whereby the migration of church members and communicants could be carefully notified to ministers and kirk-sessions in the districts in which these migrants settle. Thus they could at once be visited by Christian friends and introduced cordially to a church near them. All this means trouble, but it would certainly result in the prevention of much lapsing.

X

By WILLIAM WARD

THE problem of the alienation of the working classes from the organised churches is no new one. As far back as the year 1854 Charles Dickens wrote in *Hard Times,* "No. Coketown did not come out of its furnaces in all respects like gold that had stood the fire. First, the perplexing mystery of the place was, Who belonged to the eighteen denominations? Because, whoever did, the labouring people did not. It was very strange to walk through the streets on a Sunday morning, and to note how few of *them* the barbarous jangling of bells, that was driving the sick and nervous mad, called away from their own quarter, from their own close rooms, from the corners of their own streets, where they lounged listlessly, gazing at all the church- and chapel-going as at a thing with which they had no manner of concern."

In the main the same situation obtains to-day. There is a general feeling, among the sober, intelligent, thinking section of the working classes, sometimes audibly and somewhat forcibly expressed, that the churches are more or less religious clubs for

the upper and middle classes and that the services held in them are no concern of theirs. Whilst, however, the indifference of the working classes towards the organised forms of Christianity remains the same, there is not the same apathy among a very large proportion of them towards the ethical principles and ideals Christianity is supposed to represent. For where are many of the workers to be found on the day that is specially set apart for public worship ? In nearly all our large industrial towns they are to be found on Sunday morning at the hour of public worship in crowds in the market-squares and other open spaces attending meetings under the auspices of some Socialist or Labour organisation, where the gatherings are addressed almost exclusively by men of their own class. On Sunday evenings again, especially in the winter time, they are found meeting in halls, theatres, and other public buildings, some of the gatherings on successive Sunday evenings being of great size.

Another section of workers is to be met with early on Sunday mornings gathered together in the numerous Adult Schools that have been established in various parts of the country. These institutions have a membership of considerably over one hundred thousand and meet every Sunday morning, between the hours of seven and ten, generally in premises attached to some day or Sunday School. Another body that is composed largely of working men is

that of the P.S.A. Brotherhood movement whose meetings are held on Sunday afternoons with an aggregate attendance estimated at between one-half and three-quarters of a million. The meetings of the Brotherhood are held mostly in places of worship, though some meet in town halls or other public buildings.

If we were to get into close touch with these various bodies of workers we should find that their attitude towards the ordinary services of the churches was almost entirely one of indifference and apathy and that very seldom does it become hostile. And if we were to examine closely into the character of the teaching that prevails among them we should discover that it embraces the essential features of the ethical teaching of Christ. Even in the meetings organised by the Socialist and Labour parties, whilst avowedly of a more or less political character, we should discover that these men are waging perpetual war against poverty, sickness and disease, unemployment, bad housing, sweating—" man's inhumanity to man " in all its forms, and advocating the setting up of a new social order where everyone shall have the opportunity of living a full, free, and happy life. In fact these men have, consciously or unconsciously, assimilated the ethical teaching of the Carpenter of Nazareth, and in numerous cases there is manifest a reverence for the name of Jesus and a respect for Christianity,

despite indifference or even hostility towards the churches. The Adult Schools and Brotherhoods are essentially religious organisations. They stand for the application of Christian principles to every phase of life, and whilst adopting no formulated creed, declare for the Universal Brotherhood of Man based on the idea of the common Fatherhood of God with all that it involves.

It is therefore not hostility or even indifference towards Christianity that is the cause of working men holding aloof from the ordinary services of the churches. In numerous instances there is to be witnessed the remarkable phenomenon of places of worship with scanty congregations at the ordinary morning and evening services packed to their utmost capacity at another form of religious service in the afternoon. I refer to the P.S.A. Brotherhood meeting. The question, therefore, why working men hold aloof from the churches needs transposing. For be it remembered that in modern times, at any rate, the churches have never drawn the working classes to any appreciable extent. For upwards of half a century the question has been a perennial subject of discussion at church conferences and assemblies, at ministerial gatherings and frequently in the columns of the religious press.

As far as relates to the ordinary church services no remedy has yet been discovered. Seeing, however, that working men are now meeting in Adult

Schools on Sunday mornings, generally in premises attached to some church, and in the P.S.A. Brotherhood on Sunday afternoons in the church itself, the question we may now well ask is, " Why *do* working men come to church ? " How is it that they are attracted in such large and increasing numbers to the Brotherhood meeting whilst the vast majority of them still hold aloof from the ordinary services ? One important reason is that a form of service has been discovered that suits their temperament. How can the average man who has never been in a church for years, or who has never attended a religious service in his life, feel at home at an ordinary church service ? It may be, and undoubtedly is, inspiring and soul-uplifting to one who has been accustomed to it from his youth up, but to the outsider there is very little meaning in it. The conventionality and restraint are irksome to him, and the religious mysticism which is so helpful to others is to him a bore. He does not understand,

> The speechless awe that dare not move
> And all the silent Heaven of love.

It is like a foreign language to him. On the other hand, the freedom and unconventionality, the feeling of fellowship and comradeship so characteristic of a Brotherhood meeting strike right home. He can join in the singing of hymns set to familiar tunes with a good swinging chorus, with an abandonment and relish that do him good, whilst

the straight talk from the speaker is couched in language he can understand and gives him food for thought for the rest of the week.

There is another type of working man who has been alienated from the churches, whose value would be above rubies if he could only be attached to some form of religious activity. He is thoughtful, intellligent, fairly well read, a close student of social questions, if somewhat of a visionary. He has the idea, held by very many of his fellow working men, that the churches are out of touch with the realities of life. He holds aloof from the ordinary church services, not because he has no regard for religion, but because he considers that religion, as it is generally presented in the churches, has no relation to the vital problems of life. His soul is stirred within him as he ponders over the social condition of a large proportion of the people. He is shocked at the great number of families in nearly all our large towns and even villages who are housed under conditions that would disgrace a heathen nation— "the warrens of the poor," where health and decency are practically impossible. He laments over the fact that able-bodied men, even in times of national prosperity, are deprived of the opportunity of earning their daily bread. He has a compassionate heart for the victims of our sweated industries. He deplores the crime and hunger that "cast our maidens by the thousand on the street."

He grieves to think of the boys who are at work when they ought to be at school, and of the married women in factory and workshop who ought to be at home attending to household duties. He tells you frankly that if Christianity has no message for these poor, overburdened, oppressed souls, if it has no solution for these awful social problems, then it is not of much practical use for our every-day life. He is, at times, a diligent student of the Bible, and his imagination is fired as he ponders over the glorious visions of the new social order depicted by the Prophets, proclaimed by the divine Carpenter of Nazareth, and earnestly looked for by His immediate followers who saw in the application of His teaching, "a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth Righteousness."

This man, too, has joined the P.S.A. movement, and in it has discovered that his idea of a reorganisation of society on the lines of Christian brotherhood is shared by others. There are many men in these societies who believe that the principles and ideals of Christianity applied to the social problems of to-day will result in the banishment of poverty, the elimination of slums and sweating dens, and the securing of an environment which will give the toiler a chance of living the life God intended him to live. Men of this type have not only found in the Brotherhood movement others inspired with the same hopes and aspirations but also an outlet for

their social enthusiasm. They are now working for the cause to which they have attached themselves with an ardour that is beyond praise. It is all to the good that these men are found in a place of worship at least once a week even though the ordinary church service may have no attraction for them. They have discovered a form of religious service in which they can take part with enthusiasm and with mental and spiritual profit. They have discovered an organisation of a democratic character founded on the basis of the motto of the movement, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren," and they feel that they have thus a proprietary interest in it.

With over half a million men gathered together in places of worship on Sunday afternoons under religious auspices and their numbers increasing at such a rate that it is hoped by leaders of the movement that a membership of a million will soon be realised, Christian men need not despair though the working classes are not found in actual membership with the churches. What the final outcome of this state of things will be it would be difficult to foretell. It must be some satisfaction, however, to those who have at heart the religious welfare of the people that here, at any rate, has come into being a movement that is bridging the gulf that for so many long years has existed between the churches and the working classes. Those who are following

closely the trend of events already perceive that in this Brotherhood movement there is a mighty force at work that is not only permeating the democracy with religious thought and motive, but is also slowly but surely having a powerful influence on the Christian Church itself. Many men who once never dreamed of going to an ordinary church service have attached themselves to a Brotherhood and in course of time voluntarily joined the church. There are, indeed, several cases on record where a large proportion of church office-bearers are men who years ago never entered a place of worship. They attended one of these societies. In course of time they joined the churches and are now serving on the diaconate or filling some other office. These men carry with them into the church the democratic ideas they have been accustomed to in their trade union organisations and in the Brotherhood societies.

Thus while on the one hand the democracy is becoming permeated with Christian principles and ideals the Christian Church is benefiting by receiving an infusion of the virile and democratic element. The future of the Christian forces of our land is bright with hope notwithstanding the black clouds that have appeared above the horizon in recent times. These Brotherhoods, drawn largely from the ranks of the working classes, if left free and unhampered to work in their own way and adapt their

meetings and organisation to the needs of the time, will go far to solve the problem of the alienation of the people from the churches. By infusing a new spirit of holy enthusiasm and optimistic zeal into religious and social activities, they will hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God and the realisation of the power of His Christ.

XI

By HECTOR MACPHERSON

Non-church-going is not altogether a modern problem. A glance at ecclesiastical history reveals the fact that in all times the clergy have constantly deplored the neglect of the sacred ordinances. In Scotland the reluctance of the natural man to attend divine service was so far recognised that during the eighteenth century it was customary for the elders to drag unwilling parishioners to church, and even down to our own day, year after year, the problem of non-church-going forms a subject of anxiety in church courts. In England, perhaps more than in Scotland, the problem has reached an acute stage. Evidence of this is seen in the following resolution passed some time ago at the Lambeth Conference: "The Conference desires to call attention to the evidence supplied from every part of Christendom as to the grave perils arising from the increasing disregard of the religious duties and privileges which are attached to a due observance, both on the social and spiritual sides of the Christian Sunday. The Conference further, in pursuance of the resolutions passed upon this subject in former

conferences, calls upon Christian people to promote by all means in their power the better observance of the Lord's Day, both on land and sea, for the worship of God, and for the spiritual, mental, and physical health of man."

It is not necessary to dwell upon the phenomenon of non-church-going ; its existence is admitted and deplored. What are the causes ? One cause which has specially alienated the intellectual classes is the growing antagonism between two totally distinct conceptions of life, the scientific and the theological. True, this antagonism is no new phenomenon. In the eighteenth century Deism in England and Moderatism in Scotland were formidable opponents to supernatural Christianity. In our own day the Evolution conception of life, as interpreted by Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, Haeckel and others has increased the difficulties which face thoughtful inquirers into the credentials of Christianity as formulated in Church creeds.

But the alienation of the intellect of the time from organised Christianity has been accelerated by the theological disintegration which is proceeding within the churches. For a time, both in England and Scotland, a series of revival movements kept the critical movement in the background. In the early years of last century the force of evangelistic Christianity was so great that opponents were silenced when they witnessed the marked social

influences which the teaching of the churches produced. With the receding of the revival movements a set back was given to church attendance. The problems which lay in the background then came to the front. In England opinions about the Bible, which caused a tremendous stir during the "*Essays and Reviews*" period, began to be held by influential Church of England clergy, while in Scotland the Robertson Smith case brought into the market-place the Higher Criticism which up till then had been the monopoly of learned theologians. The effect of the controversy on the influence of the churches was very marked. In the pre-Robertson Smith days, the churches had a mission and a message. Like the prophets of old the great evangelical preachers of England and Scotland prefaced their message with a "Thus Saith the Lord." They spoke as men with authority, taking their stand on the Bible as a divinely inspired, infallible revelation. They had at their disposal means of reaching the hearts and consciences of their hearers. For the unconverted there were the terrors of the law; for the converted the encouragements and consolations of the divine word.

But with the acceptance of the Higher Criticism, the theological temperature experienced a marked fall. The controversy familiarised thoughtful laymen with quite a revolutionary view of the Bible which was no longer a guide-book to the Celestial

City, but simply the record of the speculations of explorers who were groping their way through clouds and fogs. Not only that, but the Bible was declared to be not even an authentic record of Hebrew history. It had grown up like other literature. The various portions do not necessarily belong to the time in which they are said to have been written. In the most confusing way the early writers, it was said, mixed myth, legend and history. The story of the Creation need not be taken for fact; the Fall is a legendary explanation of human sinfulness; the personality of Abraham is doubtful; the details of the Exodus and of the wilderness journey must be taken with considerable pinches of salt. In a word, the Pentateuch instead of being the record of a supernaturally guided people is in the main a compilation by ecclesiastics of the Exile period who traded upon the name and prestige of Moses in order to give historic sanction to their comprehensive schemes of reform.

Upon the average church-goer such views had a most unsettling effect. Plain men and women whose spiritual lives were inseparably associated with the old views found themselves suddenly enveloped in a mist of doubt and uncertainty. In their simple fashion they felt that the keystone of their faith was removed. If the first Adam and the Fall were to be relegated to the realm of legend, what were they to make of the reasonings of Paul

about the Second Adam and the Rise of Man by means of the Atonement ? Moreover, if there were no Divine injunctions about sacrifice in the Pentateuch, what becomes of the parallel in the Epistle to the Hebrews between the Mosaic sacrifices and the sacrifice on Calvary ?

The situation would not have been so serious for the average church-goer had the new views been promptly repudiated by the churches and their theological professors. Robertson Smith was sacrificed on the altar of expediency, but his views have prevailed in the theological colleges with the result that the preachers of to-day, especially the younger generation, loosed from their moorings and bereft of compass are sailing on unknown seas. In other words they have no arresting message. They are no longer ambassadors. In the sphere of the supernatural they have speculative opinions, surmises, but no certainties. Consequently, modern sermons as a rule are ethical rather than theological, didactic rather than spiritual, intellectual rather than doctrinal. They are conducive to a species of religious Moderatism with an instinctive aversion to Revivalism. Now where the Pentecostal element is eliminated from sermons, the churches become lethargic. The hungry sheep look up and are not fed, and naturally seek fresh fields and pastures new. The Higher Criticism spells Moderatism which again spells stagnation and,

as in the eighteenth century, decline of church influence.

In addition to its stagnating effect on the average church-goer, the Higher Criticism cripples the churches in their home missionary work. Among the working classes there has always been a large element of scepticism. In the old days Paine and Bradlaugh had a considerable following, just as among the educated classes Huxley and Tyndall had many admirers. Before the rise of the Higher Criticism the clergy as controversialists did good work. They had a thesis to defend, and between them and their opponents there was a clear issue. That cannot now be said. Paine is no longer a living force in modern thought? Why? No doubt his irreverent handling of sacred things is out of harmony with the spirit of the age, but a deeper reason is found in the fact that between his views and those of the Higher Critics there is close affinity. Let any impartial layman compare the fundamental points of the *Age of Reason* with the conclusions of the Higher Critics and he will be astonished at the resemblance. In both there is the same denial of the infallibility of the Bible, the same insistence on its legendary and unhistorical character; the difference being that while Paine barbs his reasonings with irreverent ridicule, the Higher Critics after undermining the authority of the Bible still claim for it a spiritual value. On such a platform it is

impossible to deal with the hard-headed sceptical working man. In his view the disciples of Paine and Bradlaugh no longer need to do propaganda work: it has been taken over by the clergy, especially the theological professors.

The decay of church influence from the cause mentioned has been accelerated by the secularisation of modern ideals hastened by a spell of national prosperity and increased leisure. Notwithstanding periods of depressed trade, the conditions of life to-day are much easier than they used to be. The facilities of travel are greater, the opportunities of pleasures are increased. For the religious ideal expressed in the words that man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever, has been substituted the secular ideal that man's chief end is to glorify himself and enjoy life if not for ever, at least as long as he can eat, drink, and be merry.

The tendency of to-day among all classes, notably the upper classes, is to worship the god of Pleasure and burn incense at the shrine of worldly gratification. Christianity is threatened by a new form of Paganism, all the more formidable from the facilities which are now within reach of the High Priests of the new cult. In the old days Sunday was reserved for meditation. Life from the standpoint of the churches was viewed as a kind of wilderness journey from our Egyptian bondage to the Land of Promise, and Sunday as an oasis in the

dreary wilderness march. Now, thanks to "week-ends," Society functions, Sunday trains, motor cars, etc., the day of rest has been turned into a saturnalia in which the idle rich and the rowdy poor vie with each other in bidding defiance to all things sacred.

It is a curious fact that national prosperity has always been harmful to religious zeal. In Scotland, Moderatism was at its highest influence just when the leading thinkers were in their most optimistic mood. Development was supposed to be running smoothly along the lines of Rationalism, to an extent which seemed to usher in the age of Reason, in which every man would sit under his own vine and fig tree, no Revolutionist or Calvinist daring to make him afraid. Men of culture could afford to dispense with the church : happiness not worship was the prevailing ideal. Like a bolt from the blue came the French Revolution, and terror-stricken at what was considered to be an outbreak of diabolism, the people turned to the Bible, and evangelical religion received a great impetus. Even the sceptical Gibbon became an admirer of the Established Church.

So far the causes of non-church-going. What of the remedies ? Before the churches can come within measurable distance of fulfilling their great mission, they must have a definite message, resting upon and growing out of a definite creed. It is

a common saying among ministers who aspire to be broad-minded that Christianity is a life, not a creed. It is thought that the first requisite is to reduce dogma to a minimum. In this way it is believed that many good men who at present are estranged from the churches on theological grounds would be brought back to the fold. The time no doubt has come for creed simplification, but care must be taken lest the desire for unity should lead to creed abolition. The unity of a creedless church is the unity of a landscape in a fog.

Grant that the churches have a message, the question arises: How can it best be applied to modern conditions so as to arrest attention and increase its influence? The first step is for the churches to widen their conception of their functions. To a mistake in this matter is due much of the church's loss of prestige and power. In Scotland the mistake dates from the evangelical reaction from Moderatism. The Reformers and even the Covenanters did not confine the function of the church to that of pointing sinners the way from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Salvation with them was a national as well as an individual affair, and to this theocratic conception was due the long struggle between Church and State. What was the Headship of Christ, but the watchword of the theocratic ideal of a kingdom of God upon earth? In England and Scotland

as a protest against the secularising tendencies of Moderatism, the Evangelicals looked coldly upon all secular movements that lay outside of purely religious feeling. Writing of Evangelicalism, the late Dr Dale says :—

" Although its leaders insisted very earnestly on the obligation of the individual Christian to live a devout and godly life, they had very little to say about the relations of the individual Christian to the general order of human society, or about the realisation of the Kingdom of God in all the various regions of human activity. . . . It had no such dreams as came to an ancient Jewish saint of the glory of Christ as the true Lord of the human race, the King who will listen to the cry of the oppressed and break in pieces the oppressor. It had no eagerness to take possession of the realms of Art, Science, Literature, Politics, Commerce, Industry, in the name of their true Sovereign and Prince. Hence its ethical ideal of the individual Christian was wanting in wealth and variety." [1]

Let us not, however, underrate the influence of Evangelicalism in the political and social spheres. In England, history records the fact that to the influence of the Evangelical party was largely due the abolition of slavery, and Lecky the historian has borne testimony to the great work of Wesley in raising the ideals and social position of the lower

[1] *The Old Evangelicalism and the New*, pp. 18, 19.

classes. At the same time the Evangelicals narrowed their influence by making religion too much a matter of individual salvation in the next world. Now this one-sided view of religion so long as it is held by the churches will weaken their hold, more especially at a time when sociological, bulk more largely than theological, problems in the public mind. Religion to be operative as a remedial agency must have a social as well as an individual aspect. In other words, religion must be equal to the whole of life's duties and problems. It must be a guiding as well as an inspirational force. The churches to be effective must widen their conception of religion so that no phase of human activity will remain outside of their province.

In England the Broad Church party grew up as a reaction against the Evangelical narrowness. Maurice, Kingsley, Arnold, Stanley, followed by a large number of cultured men, sought to bring religion into touch with practical problems, and, under the name of Christian Socialism, to bring the message of Christianity to the poor. The aim was praiseworthy and to this day the Church of England feels the influence of the Broad Church party. But its influence is on the decline. The Anglican Church was never dominated by Maurice and his followers : they were simply tolerated, and now that the High Church party are in the ascendant, the people of England show less inclination than

ever to accept ecclesiastical guidance. Non-conformity, too, is losing its hold of the masses. The people are more interested in social problems than purely ecclesiastical questions, and in some way the churches must respond, if the popular mind is to be reached.

In Scotland there was one great ecclesiastical leader who refused to divide life into sacred and profane, and who insisted on the true theocratic idea that religion should not be an ecclesiastical monopoly, but should touch the life of a people at all points. Dr Chalmers aimed at Christianizing society in all its aspects—scientific, social, economic —as well as individual. With Chalmers the phrase "Headship of Christ" had a significance wider than the purely ecclesiastical. It meant the subjugation of secular as well as religious activities to the King of kings and Lord of lords. In order to bring about the realisation of this theocratic ideal something else is needed than purely personal appeals to flee from the wrath to come, tract distribution, free breakfasts, etc. Chalmers was aware of this, and, accordingly, he included within the church's sphere of influence, sociology as well as theology.

The Disruption changed the current of Chalmers' activities. The churches got switched, so to speak, off the sociological on to the ecclesiastical track, with the result that while energy was being expended in the politico-ecclesiastical sphere,

grave industrial and economic problems were growing in all the large centres of population to be solved as best they could by the workers themselves without guidance from the churches. The working classes began to look upon the churches as middle-class institutions in which social prestige was a dominating factor. To the lack of sympathy on the part of the churches with their daily struggles is largely due the alienation of the working classes. If the churches are to increase their hold upon the people, if they are to keep in touch with the many-sided activity of the national life, they must show that Christianity brings a message of hope not only to the sin laden, but also to the poverty-laden who in the daily battle for bread have fallen down weary and helpless in the dusty arena of life.

It is perfectly obvious that if the churches are to make their influence felt in the sphere of sociology, the clergy must include a study of economics in their curriculum. In his day Chalmers lamented the fact that ecclesiastics paid little attention to social and economic phenomena; and it must be confessed that even at this time of day the churches are scarcely conscious of the important part which they may play in the national life. Some years ago Dr Wilson Harper in the General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland urged the need of a Chair of Social Science, on the obvious ground that

if the churches were to take a guiding part in the Christianization of society, the clergy should know something of sociology. The suggestion received no support.

In this matter the clergy might take a lesson from the Hebrew prophets. As I have said elsewhere, "they did not waste their energies in abstruse theological discussions, nor treat their hearers to thin-spun literary disquisitions. They boldly attacked the practical evils which they saw around them. Men of wealth who exploited the poor were denounced, not flattered on account of their contributions to the temple services. What gave John Knox his hold upon the affections of the Scottish people but his unsparing denunciation of wickedness in high places and his refusal to bow the knee to the Baal of his day. Socialism, with all its faults, has at least a glimmering of a great ideal, that of the brotherhood of man. Christianity supplements that with another ideal, the fatherhood of God: and if the clergy are true to their mission they should have no difficulty in presenting the Gospel in such a light to the horny-handed sons of toil that instinctively they will acknowledge the divine leadership of the Carpenter of Nazareth."

XII

By P. WHITWELL WILSON

One feels that it is something of an impertinence for one person to say why other people avoid divine worship. The relations between the Creator and the soul of a man are as delicate and incommunicable as the relations between husband and wife. We do not enquire why this or that person remains unmarried, and in matters of religion we should begin by recognising the infinite mystery of human character and experience.

My father was bred a Quaker, my mother was an Evangelical Churchwoman. At marriage they both joined the Open Brethren, and in my early training I received one lesson which has never been effaced. I was taught that One-Man-Ministry, as it is called, means a limitation of the working of God's Spirit in the church. It means that in the primary services no word must be spontaneously spoken, save by a single ecclesiastical official, who must preach whatever be his state of soul, while the rest of the church remains silent, whatever message God may have to impart. All the great evangelical revivals have been effected in spite of this system.

Such revivals have almost always proceeded beyond the recognised bounds of denominational life. I would mention only the Salvation Army, the Methodists in their earlier and better days, the Adult School Movement, the Quaker Movement, the Plymouth Brethren Movement, the movements under Moody and Sankey and Henry Drummond, and finally the great movement represented by Men's Meetings. I have heard and profited by many of the finest preachers in this country. There is not one of them who would not preach the better if he were relieved from the necessity of preaching every Sunday.

I am thus deliberately convinced that until the One-Man-Ministry is broken down, there will be no considerable advance in the numbers attending church or chapel. Without pretending to scholarship, I have read the Bible from youth upward, and I believe the One-Man system to be entirely anti-Scriptural. The practice of Our Lord was to engage his audience in friendly and free conversation. That also was the method of the Apostles. They argued, conversed, listened to objections, and answered them. It is the only method by which men are able to advance their Scriptural message, and it is in line with all the best ideas of education. The great object of the best teachers in our schools is to draw out the thoughts, to educate—*educate* the mind—not

simply to talk to the child, but to secure from the child a response. There is nothing of this in the average morning and evening sermon, and while attendance at these services stagnates, there is, outside the pale, a growing mass of the best religion, which will not tolerate what is really the essential sacerdotalism of the One-Man-Ministry.

Take a person of originality and wide culture. Can anyone suggest that it is better for him to listen, Sunday after Sunday, to the same mind travelling the same round of thoughts, when in the quiet of his library he can feed in comfort upon far more spiritual and far more delightful material in his books ? It is quite true that by forsaking the assembly he loses the social touch which is essential to religion. It is also true that he is under continual temptation not to read the best, but to be content with his Sunday paper and a sensational novel. But the enormous circulation of the finest, and in their way the most exacting books, shows that the mass of men and women are turning from the dry system of the pulpit to the living waters of a literature over which, with all its variableness, the Spirit of God can at least blow whither it listeth.

As a result of preaching and worship being the monopoly of a small and peculiar caste, we find that the Bible itself is in many ways a closed volume. The reason why working men will not go to church or chapel is that preachers will not

preach the Bible. Take the actual structure of the modern sermon. What have we seen in poetry, in art, in music ? In every direction there has been a great breaking of the fetters which limited literature and thought in the eighteenth century. But the sermon, with its fixed text at the beginning ; its pulpit language ; its careful avoidance of the humour which is one of God's best gifts to man ; its Latinised words, read often in a tone which would empty the House of Commons in two minutes, and any public meeting in five, that is the sermon to be blamed. It is as unsuited to the times as would be a volume of Rogers' poems. Here, again, the manner of the sermon is absolutely contrary to the custom and practice of the Apostles. Jesus Christ never preached from a text, never affected pulpit language, but said what he had to say in simple homely terms, not feeling it necessary to talk for just half an hour and no longer.

Take, again, any of the great speeches and apologies for Christ in the Acts of the Apostles. Their supreme merit lies in the fact that in structure they are as unlike any sermon preached to-day as it is possible to conceive.

I am not criticising in the least the employment of religious ministers and the proper payment for their services. But it is quite unusual to find a good organiser also endowed with great powers of

eloquence, and there is something rather ridiculous in the spectacle of a curate of the Church of England monopolising the pulpit while Mr Gladstone, fresh from some beautiful vision in his study, sits silent in the pew. It is a simple fact that if John Bright, springing as he did from middle-class parents, had happened to have been born outside the Society of Friends, he would never have had the chance of developing powers which made him the greatest orator of the nineteenth century. For the full and complete interpretation of the Bible it is necessary to have a full and complete experience of human life. By its very nature the One-Man-Ministry has not got such experience, and as a result the interpretation is warped, stunted, and partial.

Let me give an instance. I am often told that we ought to keep politics out of the pulpit. I read my Bible, and find that the whole of the Old Testament, in the inspiration of which so many ministers have ceased to believe, is a close and intimate blend of individual spiritual experience and sheer, unvarnished, unadulterated political application. I find that Jeremiah discussed with the utmost freedom matters of Imperial policy, as, for instance, the question whether it would be better to have an alliance with Babylon or with Egypt. By occasionally spending time on the Bible instead of going to church, I have discovered for myself that there is a

wealth of teaching in the Bible about questions of Labour, the Land Problem, Free Trade and Protection, Temperance and all the other problems in which I am interested. But I should not have known this if I had been content with the pew.

I will take an instance, and this the most provocative. I refer to the teaching of the Bible on the Fiscal question. For years the whole country has been agitated by a tremendous, and in its way a legitimate controversy. So far as I am aware, no preacher has as yet thought of turning to the first Book of Kings, in order to study the one great description of foreign trade in the Bible. There you have Hiram, King of Tyre, and Solomon establishing a system of mutual exchange—one side supplying timber, the other side supplying various food stuffs. Obviously this immortal passage contains the whole secret of commerce and industry, namely, that behind all the competition and rivalry there should be an essential mutual service. How many wars, how many scares, how many taxes would have been saved if only practical business men had been encouraged to read the Bible from their own point of view, and to draw out truths like this, to which apparently the eyes of a One-Man-Minister are by education rendered blind ?

Let me give another illustration in the purely spiritual field. Clergy and ministers, after sacrificing the inspiration of the Bible, which they do not

always read, have also abolished the old doctrine of reward and punishment. I am one who still believes that there is in life the certainty of eternal regret and eternal satisfaction; but that is, of course, an old-fashioned view, which the pulpit has long since discredited. However, I turn to the words of Our Lord Himself, and suddenly discover that the grounds of this regret and this satisfaction have been entirely mistaken, or at any rate most incompletely stated by the preachers. The great parable upon the subject puts a wholly novel complexion upon the matter, and I should never have discovered what Christ said in reference to it if I had contented myself with going to church. He did not apparently mind very much whether a person rendered him the lip-service of saying "Lord, Lord." He did not ask whether a man was converted or what he believed. He inquired solely into the impulse of the man's heart. Have you visited the sick? Have you clothed the naked? Have you succoured the prisoner? Then you are among the blest. Have you failed to do these things? Then the time will come when you will never forgive yourself for that lost opportunity. Yet this is not preached. It is scarcely referred to. There seems to be in the church an idea that you must never say anything from the pulpit which can be criticised as partisan, or which will disturb the minds of those who listen. That again is

absolutely unscriptural. Peter, Paul, James, and John spent their whole lives in disturbing people's minds. Yet I agree that the minister, holding as he does an official position, is frequently under some slight restraint. But that is all the more reason why he should allow others, who are not under that restraint, to have the full opportunity of the Spirit of God which was enjoyed in the early Church.

From all this one concludes that the great aim of the churches should be to allow the Spirit of God the fullest, freest opportunity of expression through all members of the Church, however humble. From such an ideal the denominations, one and all, are apt to recoil, and this is the great difficulty in the way of reform from within. Still, the barriers are breaking, and there is arising within the Free Churches what is, in fact, an entirely new church, distinct from the older communions, and essentially separate. There is very little organic connection between the membership of the Men's Meeting and the congregations at morning and evening service, and in weighing statistics of church membership, it must be remembered that logically the figures for the Men's Meetings should be added. This situation can only be described as abnormal in the ecclesiastical sense. It is a little like the position in the earliest days of the Church, when you had on the one hand the synagogue, and on the other hand the Christian communion, not separate as yet, and

indeed sometimes meeting on common ground, but the one steadily bearing on from the other into the future.

It is at least remarkable that the Men's Meeting, and its corresponding type of Women's Meeting, entirely eschews the ritual and the formalities which have grown up around the older denominations. Into the general question of ritual I should be sorry to enter, but it does seem to me plain, that if a church retain ritual, it ought at least to respect it. What are we to say of Baptists who do not preach adult baptism? Of Congregationalists who retain the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but on hygienic grounds abolish the loving cup, and supply liqueur glasses in its place? In many churches, and especially the Free Churches, there has fallen upon this service the blight of Laodicea, and working men at their meetings, whether in the Adult School or on Sunday afternoon, will have none of these things in which the churches themselves only half believe.

A mere glance at many congregations will show the great preponderance of women, and one is sometimes amazed at the readiness with which people thereby assume that the service has failed. One cannot be surprised at the attractiveness to women of the liturgy of the English Church, when one remembers how full that liturgy is of home inspiration, of childhood and motherhood, of pity, of prayer, and of reverence. The brightest spot in

the landscape is that the women of England have in such large numbers retained their love of religion, and this love is, I believe, due to their splendid fidelity to the home. Men who feel shy when they go to church, often feel shy when they are asked to spend an evening in their own domestic circle. They are men who have got used to the public-house and the club, the football ground and the race-course, the theatre and the debating society. The tram and the Tube and the restaurant have got into their blood. In fact, home-loving and church-loving are two aspects of the same thing, and the great achievement of the Men's Meeting is that it is winning men back, not to religion alone, but also to their homes.

The nature of worship is frequently misunderstood. Reverence may be compared to an art. It is an impulse which must spring from good soil. An act of worship on Sunday, if it is to be real, must be the fruit of worship and study and quiet in the week. You cannot expect such reverence from men who are living in streets from which the land system has blotted out God and His works, and who are toiling for hours which leave them no time or energy for the higher things. Again, one may call attention to the colour-blindness of the churches in reference to the plain teaching of the Scriptures upon these subjects. For a hundred years the Labour movement has been proceeding. Its whole

object has been to make it possible for men and women to live lives in which religion can enter. If I had been content to hear what was said about the Bible in churches and chapels, I should never have learned the fundamental facts that the Jews became a nation as the result of a labour movement, that Moses was the leader of a great strike in Egypt, and that the service of God was there declared to be incompatible with the hours of labour unduly prolonged. Yet when one mentions these things, the invariable comment from clergy and ministers is, " How amusing," or, " What an original idea."

Take the case of a working man. The strain of his labour is removed at the end of the week. He is free, or at least his chains are relaxed. To that man in his leisure has come a choice. On the one side of the street is the club, on the other side of the street is the chapel. The chapel presents the higher call, and the loftier effort. But the man is so worn out that he has not the energy to pursue any line save the line of least resistance. Let us put it another way. Suppose he does work reasonable hours. He finds that the club affords him a chance of conversation and brotherly intercourse. At the club he can speak his mind ; at the church he must sit silent, without the slightest opportunity for self-expression. He chooses the club.

I will conclude with a remark by Mr Chesterton, who once said that our great mistake lay in imagin-

ing that Great Britain was a Christian country. It is simply a country where there are some few Christians. The methods which the churches should employ amid their heathen surroundings are the methods which have been employed by the great missionaries in all other heathen countries—free intercourse, friendly argument, explanation, question and answer.

One final paragraph. If one's main thesis is right—that the Spirit of God is not allowed free intercourse in our denominations—then we need not wonder if there be a lack of power in the changing of men's lives. Some of us have almost lost the notion that men's hearts can be turned from the lower to the higher. I can only say that recently, case after case has been brought to my notice from the most varied sources, and there can be no doubt or question that the uplifting of manhood is as much the work of Christian effort as ever it was in the days of most frequent and startling miracle.

XIII

By JOHN W. GULLAND, M.P.

If non-church-going is an offence, all classes are guilty. The West End is not better than the East End. Working men are no worse than leisured men. This is not a class problem, but a national one.

Public opinion in Scotland (with which I am mainly concerned) is still on the side of church-going. The presumption is in favour of attendance at church at any rate once every Sunday, and he who stays at home feels bound to excuse himself. The excuses are as numerous as the empty seats. For several years there has appeared in that delightful Scottish periodical, *The Morning Watch*, a monthly picture of some apologetic backslider, and the series seems to be interminable. Every time the pretence is unmasked, the excuse becomes weaker. We realise that if people were quite frank, they would drop their pretexts and admit that they do not go to church because they do not want to.

That only takes us a step further back—why do they not want to go? The answers will range themselves into reasons in the church and reasons outside.

In the old days an idea prevailed that church-going and religion were identical.

> "The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip
> To haud the wretch in order."

Without exact definition many attended service as a sort of religious insurance. That restraint has gone. Thanks to the broader teaching of recent years the church herself has dissipated that delusion. Church-going is no longer regarded as essential to heaven-going. The inevitable consequence has been emptier pews. But there has been a corresponding—a more than corresponding—gain. The standard of morality has risen, the social conscience has been quickened, the willingness to serve has been stimulated. The extraordinary interest in social problems and their discussion has diverted much of the energy which formerly ran in congregational grooves. But the reforming enthusiast is apt to forget how much he is indebted to the Christian atmosphere of his early training and how his efforts would be fruitless if the Christian background were removed. Men and women can no longer be forced to attend church. They must appreciate the privilege for themselves. The working six days bring so much worry and trouble and temptation that the wise man will take every opportunity of inhaling purer air and receiving fresh help. Speaking for myself, I confess that if circumstances prevent my attendance at church,

my spiritual and moral temperature falls. There is so much to pull us down that we dare not neglect any influence that can raise us.

Worship and edification are the two elements in church-service. To many minds neither of these appeal. How few of us really worship! The silence of a Friends' Meeting is a trying time except for those who have the gift of meditation. The ritual of the Church of England may be rattled through in meaningless reiteration, and Presbyterian prayers may provoke nothing but criticism. To most, the praise portion of the service is pleasant because of its associations. The old psalms recall the days long gone, and the hymn reminds of some spiritual experience. Women have much more a natural instinct for worship than men, and consequently their attendance at church has not been affected to anything like the same extent.

In Scotland the sermon is still the main feature. And let me say in passing that a Scotsman finds a terrible lack of grip in the mild essays to which he has often to listen south of the Tweed. Tastes differ. What inspires and animates one man is to another merely a wearisome thirty minutes. Yet here is the very core of the influence of the church. The message of the preacher is the essence of the church's work. "Repent! Believe!" If the Gospel is presented faithfully and powerfully, this is the most important item in the life of the nation. Good preaching is

essential for the success of a church and for the growth of an individual. Only those who have been accustomed to it can realise its value, and can feel the emptiness of a service without it.

The different denominations each with its particular form of service afford a variety wide enough —in a city—to suit all church-goers. But within each denomination there might be greater diversity. The services all conform to the same type. Sabbath after Sabbath the same features are monotonously reproduced. Some men stay away to avoid what they call "the same auld hech-how," and the younger generation assert in their modern slang that they are "fed up" with church-going. Could not the Presbytery delimit a sphere of influence and character of service for its congregations? Since the introduction of instrumental music into the churches no alteration has been made in the ritual except the holding of an annual flower or harvest service.

What changes there have been in the world of recent years! but the public whose week-day habits have been transformed find in the churches no change. Of course the gospel remains the same and the need of the human heart, but the presentation of the one to the other must necessarily be adapted to ever-changing circumstance. Political propaganda has altered in these times, open-air meetings and a great increase in heckling having

been the main developments. At first candidates disliked both. But any loss of dignity has been more than made up by the closer touch into which candidates have been brought with the electors.

If men will not go to places of worship why should they not be addressed in the parks and streets or on the hillside or seashore ? This work has been left too much to the unattached evangelist. And why should men not have an opportunity of asking questions ? They often complain that in church they have to sit and listen with no chance of question or reply. An occasional day spent in answering questions would attract the genuine truth-seeker as well as the curious, and would be helpful to minister and people alike.

The organisations of the church have passed through great changes in recent years. The Christian Endeavour Society, the Boy's Brigade, the Boy Scouts have all found a place. The most notable addition, however, has been the P.S.A., which has proved the popularity of a bright short service in which men feel that they have a real, personal part. But, curiously enough, these services have had no influence on the regular church service, which has gone on in stereotyped fashion as though it had been fixed under the Mosaic dispensation. So far as the effect upon the attenders is concerned, it does not greatly matter whether a man

goes to church or to the P.S.A. The difference is that in the latter case he is not so likely to come into touch with the minister, and to that extent the church and its representative suffer.

One item in the church service which keeps a few people away is the collection. To the hearty Christian this is a privilege as well as a means of grace. Wesley's definition of religion as "Justification, sanctification, and a penny a day" is being continually exemplified in the generous liberality of the members of many churches. The wonderful givings of the United Free Church of Scotland exhibit a national characteristic of which Scotland may well be proud. But there are many self-pleasers, whose money is all spent on their own comfort and amusement, who grudge the trifling contribution expected when 'the plate' goes round. The same narrow spirit keeps some who are wealthy and high in the social scale out of church membership lest they should become involved in subscriptions for the multifarious schemes in which a living church must embark. For all such there is no cure but the miracle of the grace of God.

So much for inside considerations. Now about influences outside the church. In the so-called good old days everyone was supposed to go to church three times every Sunday, though there is no proof of this exemplary regularity. In that golden age there were few competing attractions. The church

was at once the place of education and social intercourse, almost the only one where a home-loving population could foregather. Newspapers were scarce, books were expensive luxuries. Nowadays the poorest buys his evening paper, and if he cares, has access for a sixpence to the finest literature. Free libraries abound ; continuation and technical classes become daily more numerous and useful. Meetings of every sort and size appeal to the most diversified tastes. Music and art have gained wide circles of students and enthusiasts. Amusements that were once regarded as pernicious have been purged ; theatres and billiard rooms are now clean and well-conducted. The hours of labour are far shorter than of old, but work is harder while it lasts, and the desire for recreation has enormously increased. The craving for light amusement has caught every class of the community — even the dwellers in the manse. The more serious forms of popular instruction have been gradually discarded, and the distinguished lecturers whom our fathers heard so eagerly have been displaced by the cinematograph show. Even our clothes have changed. Would it not then be a matter of surprise if all these changes had not some reflection within our churches ?

From the ecclesiastical blue-books one does not gather that Scotland has deserted the church. In the rural districts practically the whole population

" face the kirkward mile," and from long distances shepherds and ploughmen

> " nearer draw
> To whaur the kirkton lies alaw,
> Mair neebours, comin' saft an' slaw
> Frae here an' there,
> The thicker thrang the gate, an' caw
> The stour in air."

Thousands of young people from the rural districts are flocking to the towns and cities, where they are emancipated from the oversight of their elders and withdrawn from the influences which moulded their upbringing. This is the stage at which a drift is apt to take place. The Y.M.C.A. is active, and theoretically the churches have a system of transfer. But many young people succumb to the temptations of the new surroundings and are lost not only to the church but to morality. On the other hand, many of the leading men of our cities are drawn from the rural population. Hard-headed, determined workers they are—full of zeal and ambition. Their neighbours see their shabby knapsack and little dream of the field-marshal's baton which will emerge. It is of the very utmost importance to the community that young men from the country should be welcomed and encouraged for the high duty of public service that lies before them.

Undoubtedly there is a connection between the environment of a man and his moral and spiritual

state. Non-church-going is most marked among that deplorable minority which constitutes the social problem. This is one link of that vicious circle which binds their lives. When we permanently clear the slums and settle all those perplexing problems that now baffle statesmen and administrators, one of the by-products of the new creation will be a greater interest in religious matters on the part of the regenerated masses. The converse is equally true. The character of a man influences his surroundings. Chalmers said: "A whole parish of Christians would be a parish of well-conditioned families."

I do not believe that many men are kept outside the churches because of their supposed lack of sympathy with the working classes. Some may make that an excuse, but it is not a reason. To take the church I know, the United Free Church of Scotland, working people are to be found in all its congregations. Some churches are composed entirely—members and office-bearers—of working people, and many honoured ministers are sons of working men. The whole fabric of the Presbyterian Church is democratic. If we are rejoicing in reforms that have brought comfort and happiness to Labour, these are due chiefly to the Christian conscience, an unorganised reality which combines the sentiment of all the Christian churches. Here and there may exist some pompous fool of a minister whose ridiculous snobbery has estranged

the sympathy of an earnest working man and made him suspicious of the church and all its agencies. But that is exceptional. The Established Church of Scotland has shown its keen interest in the masses through its social scheme which provides help in the most needed forms for the same kind of men and women for whom the Master lived. People are realising more and more that Christ "was a man, a poor working man, who had a heart for the poor."

"This is the Gospel of Labour—ring it, ye bells of the kirk,
The Lord of Love came down from above to live with the men who work."

At the other end of the social scale the difficulty is much greater. The rich man, immersed in his money or money-making, is apt to become theoretically or actually an agnostic. Proud of his power, he attributes all his success to his own clever brain, than which he knows nothing greater. In the old days Society (with a big S) insisted upon church attendance as a badge of respectability. Fortunately for the sincerity of religion that convention is departed from. The rich man is impervious to influence, and only through loss is his heart likely to be softened.

I do not believe that for non-church-going there is any universal or heroic remedy. The responsibility lies with the existing church members. Of course in practice the minister is the man who has the power to change matters. His profession

has suffered because people have insisted on putting it on a pedestal. After all the minister is only a man—usually very human. If every parish could be brought up to the level of the best, little would remain to be done. As Carlyle said, "With a Chalmers in every British parish much might be possible." Ministers are expected to be models of perfection and to combine qualities not often found together. As well as a saint, he is presumed to be a brilliant preacher, a diligent visitor, and a capable organiser. To be successful he must be all four. We begin to realise that the leader in every walk of life must know his own subject—*and* human nature, for his work is the application of his speciality to humanity. All others mix freely with their fellows on an equality, but the clergyman is shut off as belonging to a class apart. From the day he enters the theological college he is somehow not as other men and they are under restraint in his presence. His training is too academic and has too little reference to real life. If he had to spend a year in business, attending markets or travelling for orders, he would learn something of the raw material of mankind with which he will have to deal. In the history of the Scottish Church it is remarkable how the most successful ministers have been those who began their lives in some other occupation which has given them a knowledge of their fellows. Certainly, let

us preserve the dignity of the ministerial office, but the long black coat and the white 'choker' ought not always to be in evidence. I remember a minister of the old school criticising a colleague who usually dressed like a layman, and remarking, "Ah! I would not betray my Master!" The result was that most of the work of the former missed fire, and he did not advance his Master's cause.

The constant recollection that his work is with living men and women is the most important lesson that a minister has to learn. His sermons must not be idle abstractions, but must touch his hearers in their thought and life. In his address at the laying of the foundation stone of the New College in 1846, Chalmers said that the object of the college would be to teach the students "that the Christian minister is a man of no rank because a man of all ranks; and that, although he should have an education which might qualify him for holding converse with princes and peers, it is his peculiar glory to be a frequent visitant of the poor man's humble cottage, and to pray by the poor man's dying bed." The secret of church attendance is visitation. "A house-going minister creates a church-going people." One or two brilliant preachers will maintain a full church by reason of their discourses, but kindly attention and sympathy are stronger factors in drawing and holding a congregation. The devotion of warm-

hearted people always comes as the reward of courage and industry.

The minister must be backed up. The kirk-session is usually supposed to be the stumbling block in the path of progress. Men who are quick to adopt all the latest improvements in their own business and are ever ready to scrap old machinery will yet cling most tenaciously to antiquated methods of church work. Office-bearers should support and encourage their minister, especially as regards new developments that seem to him desirable. The rank and file must also do their part. The Christian Church ought to be the outstanding example of comradeship. Jealousy and ill-natured gossip should not exist. Friendliness and neighbourliness should prevail.

To prevent leakages there should be thorough organisation. The necessities of modern industry cause innumerable removals. "Gone, no address," explains a depleted roll. The voting register suffers the same wastage. Political parties find that women can trace removals with marvellous success, and the vote is thus saved. But in the domain of the church, if the removal is beyond the sphere of influence of the congregation, little trouble is taken. The disjunction certificate, better known as "the lines," is asked for, and, though theoretically there is a following-up process, actually out of sight is usually out of mind. The only way to prevent this

lapsing is the adoption of the territorial system, and the constant revision of the communion roll. This may be sneered at as machinery, but if statistics are to be criticised, machinery must be employed to place them on a satisfactory basis.

But I return to my point. Church attendance is not synonymous with religion. Many half-day hearers spend devoted Sabbath hours in religious work of every description. But if they can, they attend the "diet" of worship for strength and sustenance in their Christian work. Henry Drummond has some edifying thoughts on this point in *The City Without a Church.* "If the masses who never go to church only knew that the churches were the mute expression of a Christian's *wants* and not the self-advertisement of his sanctity, they would have more respectful words for churches." The religion of Christ is bigger and wider than the ritual of the churches, and His Spirit becomes slowly but surely diffused in the lives of the people.

"Poor sad humanity,
Through all the dust and heat,
Turns back with bleeding feet
By the weary round it came,
Unto the simple thought
By the great Master taught,
And that remaineth still,
Not he that repeateth the name
But he that doeth the will."